

Did You *Know?*

- ✓ Tooth problems are more prevalent in children who:
 - were born prematurely
 - have a low birth weight
 - come from lower income families
- ✓ Excess sugar consumption increases risk for cavities.
- ✓ Cavities look like small brown holes on the tooth.
- ✓ You must replace your child's toothbrush every 6 months and after they are sick.
- ✓ You can prevent cavities by using a toothbrush to brush away any leftover food on the teeth and gums.
- ✓ Mothers' nutrition during pregnancy can influence the dental growth and development of the fetus.
- ✓ You should see your dentist during your first trimester of pregnancy.
- ✓ By the time your infant is 6 months old, 2 to 4 teeth may have erupted.
- ✓ Clean babies' teeth twice daily with gauze or a soft baby toothbrush (no fluoride toothpaste until 2 years).
- ✓ Swallowing fluoride toothpaste can upset your child's stomach. Teach and encourage kids to rinse and spit.
- ✓ Once your child is able to spit out the toothpaste instead of swallowing (around 2 years of age), they may begin to use fluoride toothpaste. A rice-sized amount of toothpaste is all you need.
- ✓ Do you have well water? Talk to your dentist. You may need extra fluoride.

Resources

- ✓ **Florida Dental Association Project:**
Dentists Care. (850) 681-3629 ext. 304.
- ✓ **Oral Health for Children:**
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/oral-health/brush-oral-health/promoting-oral-health-children-disabilities>
- ✓ **Florida Dental Association:**
<http://www.floridadental.org>
- ✓ **Prenatal Dental Care:**
<http://www.dentalgentlecare.com/pregdentcaretips>
- ✓ **Dental Care for Your Baby:**
https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/dental/birth_oral_health.htm



Information provided by:
Florida Center for Inclusive Communities, a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities
University of South Florida

Please Cite this Document as:
Vaughn, B.J., Brace, H., & Havercamp, S.M. (2008). *For the Mouths of Babes: The Importance of Early Oral Hygiene*. Florida Center for Inclusive Communities, <http://fffic.org>.

Development of this material was supported by the Administration on Developmental Disabilities (#90-DD-0592, Fox and Kincaid)

For more information or to order additional copies visit <http://fffic.org>

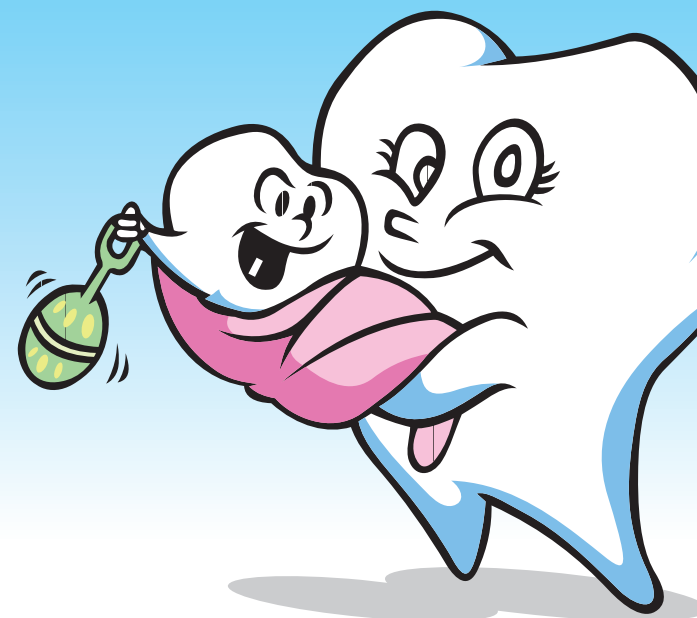


A Behavioral-Health Information Program

for Children and Adults with Disabilities

For the Mouths of Babes:

The Importance of Early Oral Hygiene

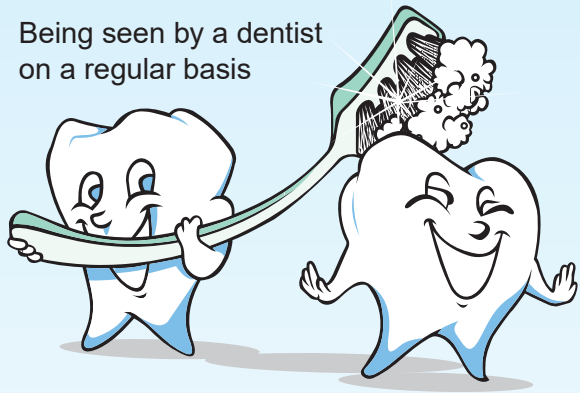


Infant Well-Being

What is Oral Hygiene?

Oral hygiene involves **keeping our mouth healthy** through simple steps such as:

- ✓ Brushing THOROUGHLY twice a day
- ✓ Flossing daily
- ✓ Being seen by a dentist on a regular basis



Why is Oral Hygiene Important?

Oral hygiene helps to prevent tooth decay in infants. Decay can cause pain for a baby and lead to more problems later. Baby teeth help children make sounds properly, eat, hold space for permanent teeth and show off those smiles. **In short, healthy teeth are important for healthy development!**

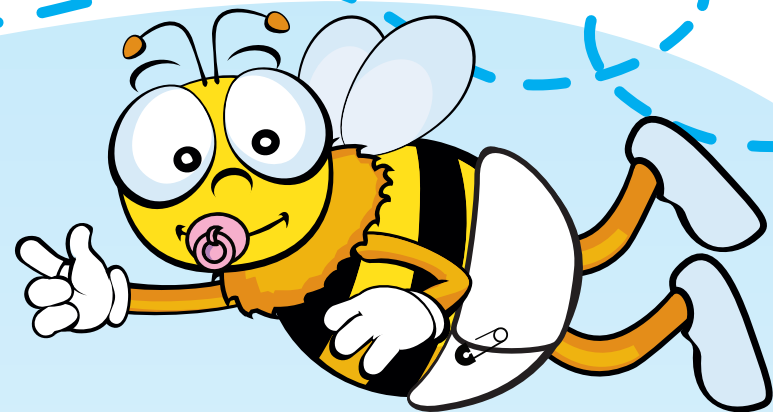
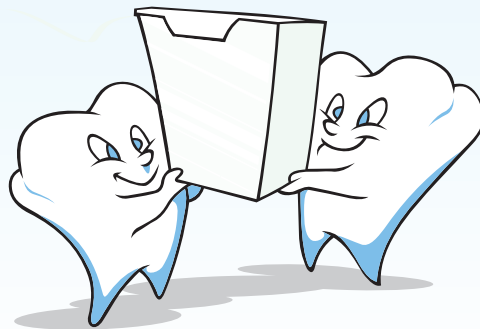
What Can I Do?

During Pregnancy:

1. Eat healthy foods and take vitamins
2. Restrict sugar consumption.
3. Brush and floss daily.

With My Baby:

1. Avoid letting your baby fall asleep with a bottle or at the breast.
2. Limit your baby's sugar intake. Sugar leads to tooth decay.
3. Clean your baby's teeth with a baby's toothbrush or a soft cloth and water 2-3 times a day.
4. Be a healthy role model! Let your baby watch you brush and floss.
5. Have your baby seen by a dentist by their first birthday or 6 months after the first tooth erupts.



What Happens if I Don't?

- ✓ By the age of 6, 56% of U.S. children have cavities.
- ✓ When children have serious tooth and gum problems, it can make it hard or painful for them to eat and speak.
- ✓ Oral health problems can cause social, behavior, and learning problems for your child.
- ✓ Cavities and gum disease can cause your child pain and early tooth loss.
- ✓ If infants are given bottles or the breast at naptime or bedtime, the fluid can pool around the teeth and cause cavities.
- ✓ Remember, some of the baby teeth are intended to be there until about 13 years old.

