

# What Parents Should Know About Baby Bottle Tooth Decay



Mild Decay



Moderate Decay



Severe Decay

## Baby Bottle Tooth Decay is Avoidable

Baby bottle tooth decay is caused by prolonged contact with liquids containing sugar, almost all liquids other than water. This can happen from putting your child to bed with a bottle of formula, milk, juice, soft drinks, sugar water, and sugared drinks. Baby bottle tooth decay is also caused when babies are allowed to suck on a bottle or breastfeed for longer than a mealtime, either when awake or asleep.

### Simple Steps Can Help Protect Your Child's Teeth

- **Never put your child to bed with a bottle.**

By seven or eight months of age, most children no longer need feedings during the night. Children who drink bottles while lying down also may be more prone to developing ear infections.

- **Only give your baby a bottle during meal times.**

Do not use a bottle as a pacifier and do not allow your child to walk around with a bottle or drink from it for extended periods of time. Instead, use a clean pacifier or comfort your child with a blanket or toy.

- **Teach your child to drink from a cup as soon as possible.**

Usually by one year of age, a child is capable of drinking from a cup. If you are concerned about a mess with the cup, use one that has a snap-on lid with a straw or one that has a special valve to prevent spilling.

- **Keep your child's teeth clean.**

After feedings, gently brush your baby's gums and any baby teeth with a clean washcloth or a soft infant toothbrush.

- **Use water and a soft child-sized toothbrush for daily cleaning.**

Begin brushing your children's once your child has seven to eight teeth.

By the time your toddler is two years of age, you should be brushing his teeth once or twice a day, preferably after breakfast and before bedtime. Once you are sure your child will spit, and not swallow, toothpaste, you should begin using fluoride toothpaste. Use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste to limit the amount he can accidentally swallow. Also check with your doctor or dentist to see if your tap water is fluoridated.

Source: American Dental Association and Give Kids A Smile