

When should toothbrushing start?

After the first teeth erupt through the gum:

- Daily wipe the teeth and gums gently with a clean damp washcloth or gauze pad or use a 'finger brush'

At about 18 months:

- Use a small tooth brush with soft bristles
- Twice a day - after breakfast and at bedtime
- Start by teaching your child how to hold the brush
- Your child will probably want to copy parents or brothers and sisters, and will probably want to brush his or her own teeth.
- Because a young child cannot brush his/her teeth very well, you should brush his/her teeth – aim to help with 'every surface of every tooth two times every day'.

hands on supervision with putting toothpaste on the brush and brushing until your child is 6 – 7 years old

After the second birthday

- **Begin using a junior strength fluoridated toothpaste. Parents should apply the toothpaste to the brush**
- Put only a smear of fluoridated junior toothpaste on your child's toothbrush
- Unsupervised, a young child is likely to squeeze a large amount of adult toothpaste on the brush, and swallow most of the toothpaste
- Encourage your child to spit out the toothpaste after brushing rather than rinsing. Putting water into the mouth may stimulate the swallowing reflex, causing both rinse water and toothpaste to be swallowed.

A smear of fluoridated junior toothpaste is recommended for 2 – 6 year olds

Fluorides make tough teeth

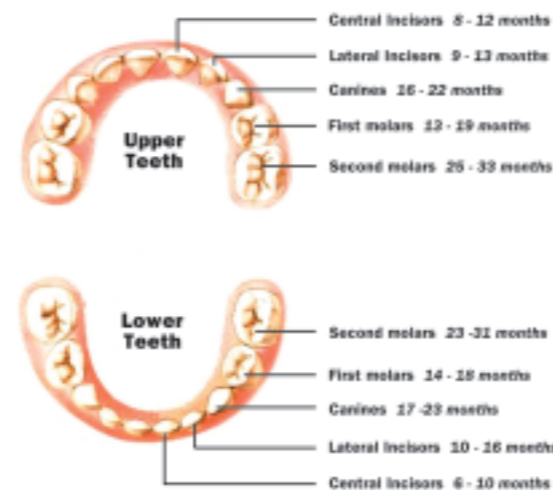
Fluorides are important for protecting teeth from decay:

- They act with minerals in saliva to restore and harden teeth damaged by early reversible decay
- Fluoride makes the tooth surface mature faster and become more resistant to decay

Fluoride occurs naturally in minute quantities in most foods and water.

Ask a dental professional before beginning to use any additional fluoride products for your child's teeth. Keep all fluoride products out of the reach of young children.

Time when first teeth erupt



Further information

Dental Practice Education Research Unit
The University of Adelaide South Australia 5005

Toll free 1800 805 738

Fax (08) 8303 4858

Email: dperu@adelaide.edu.au

Website: [//www.adelaide.edu.au/socprev-dent/dperu](http://www.adelaide.edu.au/socprev-dent/dperu)

REMEMBER

- DON'T** leave bottle with child at night
- DON'T** give sweetened drinks or fruit juices in bottle
- AVOID** long feeding periods during day or night
- AVOID** sweets and sticky snacks
- DON'T** put honey on the dummy
- DON'T** skip regular tooth brushing

DO

- BRUSH** your child's teeth twice a day with low FLUORIDE toothpaste
- NO DRINKS OR SNACKS** after brushing at bedtime
- CHANGE** from a bottle to a CUP or FEEDING MUG
- LIMIT** soft drinks, cordial and fruit drink
- Use **FLUORIDATED TAP WATER** for drinking
- ENCOURAGE** tooth-friendly snacks
- ESTABLISH** regular meals & healthy eating habits
- CHECK** your child's teeth regularly for dark spots

When do I take my toddler to the dentist?

After all of the baby teeth have erupted.

The first dental visit can be made when your child is 18 -24 months old; or earlier if you see dark spots or discoloured or chalky-looking patches on the front teeth.

Date of your next appointment

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Colgate Caries Control Program

Decay Decay Decay

Newly emerged teeth are particularly vulnerable to dental decay.

As teeth get older and become more mature, the outer surface becomes stronger and more resistant to acid attack.



Figure 1: Healthy teeth



Figure 2: early dental decay

Your child's first teeth

Babies and toddlers rely completely on their parents and carers to make choices about food and oral health habits.

As soon as the first teeth emerge through the gum, they are attacked by the acids in food and plaque **every time your baby eats or drinks.**

The enamel surface of your baby's teeth is THINNER and NOT AS TOUGH as adult teeth.

It is important that your child's baby teeth stay healthy:

- For chewing
- For speaking
- To keep the spaces needed for permanent teeth to fit into the mouth
- To avoid toothache!

Drink	pH
Water	7.0 (neutral)
Natural orange juice	3.6
Apple juice	3.3
Rose-Hip syrup	2.9
Raspberry/Lime cordial	2.8
Soft drinks	2.4 – 3.1 (acidic)

**Table 1: pH of juices, cordial and soft drinks shows acid levels compared to water = 7 (neutral).
pH 5 is 10 times more acidic than pH 6.
pH 4 is 10 times as acidic as pH 5.**

Diet and low decay risk

Tooth decay is caused mainly by eating sugary foods or acidic or sweetened drinks too often:

- Home cooked meals (low in added sugar) plenty of vegetables and fresh fruit are best for your child
- Fast foods and processed foods are often loaded with hidden sugars, fats and salt. Check nutritional information on packaging
- Provide snacks that are nutritious and low in sugar
- Limit sweets and sticky snacks, soft drinks, cordial and fruit drinks for children of all ages
- 'Grazing' pattern of frequent snacking increases decay risk
- The effect of acidic foods and drinks is reduced when they are diluted or consumed at mealtimes with other foods
- Between meals choose **non-acidic drinks eg water & milk.**

What IS plaque?

Plaque is a sticky film on the teeth that forms daily in the mouth and cannot be seen. It contains millions of bacteria (germs) which use sugar as their food, at the same time producing acid which attacks and softens the teeth.

Babies do not have plaque bacteria in their mouths when they are born. These bacteria are passed from others, usually from the main carer, through using the same spoon to check the taste/temperature of food, putting the dummy into your own mouth to clean it or by kissing.

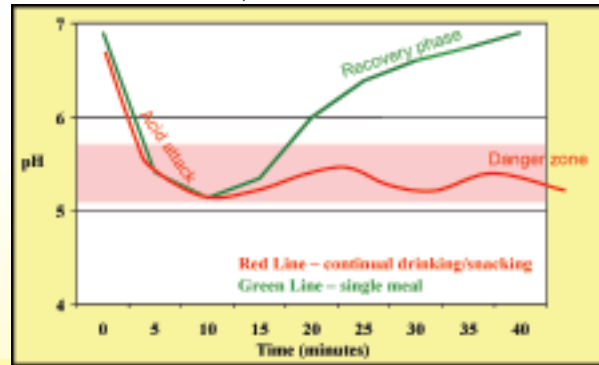
Decay on the top front teeth often occurs when children have been bottle fed for too long. When a child has continuous access to a bottle containing milk, sweetened drinks or fruit juice, **prolonged acid attack occurs.**

If the bottle is left with the child at bedtime, the risk of decay is even greater. The saliva flow in the mouth while sleeping is greatly reduced, hence acids forming in the mouth are washed away at a slower rate.

Our teeth are attacked by food and plaque acids every time we eat or drink. The acid attack lasts for approximately 20 minutes, until food particles are diluted and washed away by saliva. Acid is continually present if the baby is sucking a sweetened dummy or has unrestricted access to a bottle containing milk or juice throughout the day or night.

Prolonged acid attack e.g. night bottle

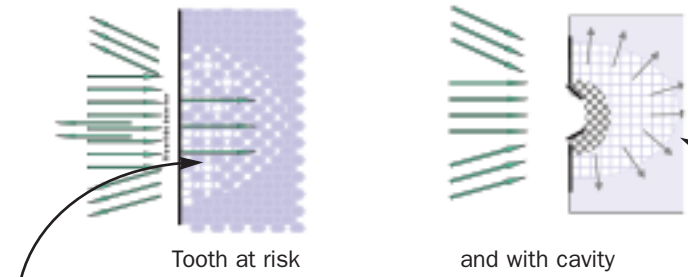
Figure 3: Stephan Curve - showing acid level in mouth following consumption of food and drink.



Change from the bottle to a cup or feeding mug as soon as possible. If a bottle is needed at night to settle the child, offer only plain boiled water and **remove the bottle once the child is asleep.**

Acid attack

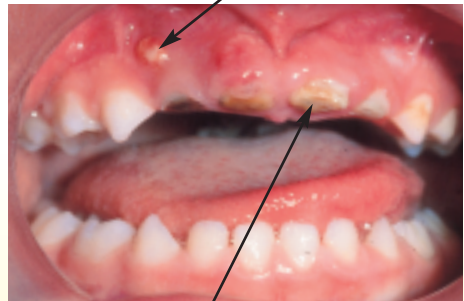
Acid damage starts below the tooth surface, dissolving minute amounts of tooth. When the acid is gone, the teeth recover if there is enough time before the next acid attack.



In a healthy mouth, the constant decay and healing processes balance each other. Continual acid attack upsets the balance and **a honeycomb effect of tiny holes develops below the surface.** The tooth becomes fragile and eventually the weakened enamel surface breaks. **This allows bacteria to enter and the decay process speeds up.**

Figure 4: Advanced dental decay

Reddened gum where painful abscesses have formed.



Rotted stumps of teeth

Decay Decay Decay Decay