

Healthy Smiles

from the **Start**

Dental Care Tips for Mom and Baby

The benefits of good dental health begin well before your baby is born so get an early start on a lifetime of healthy smiles by taking good care of your own mouth now.



For Mom: Tips for Maintaining a Healthy Mouth During Pregnancy

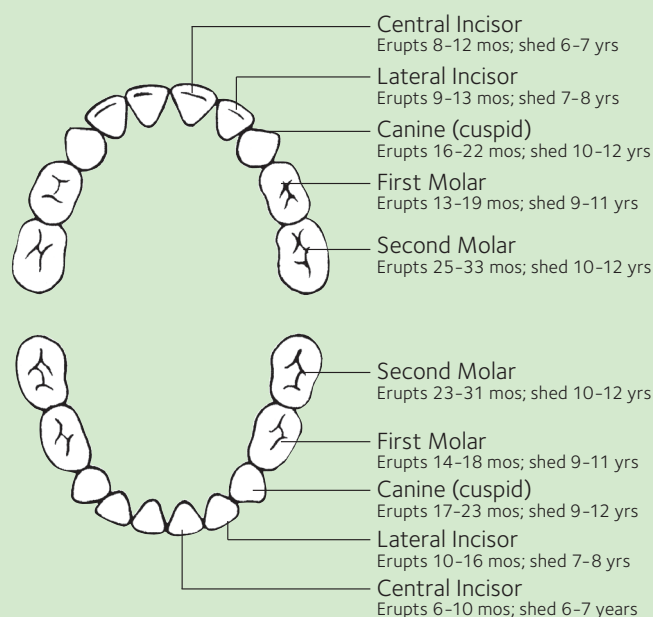
- Brush for two minutes, twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and floss every day.
- Eat healthy foods and follow your physician's advice about diet.
- When you need a snack, choose foods that are low in sugar and nutritious, such as raw fruits and vegetables, yogurt, or cheese.
- Visit your dentist. For most women, routine dental visits are safe during pregnancy.
- Tell your dentist that you are pregnant, about any changes you have noticed in your dental health and about any medications you are taking.
- Your dentist may recommend using a mouth rinse to help control plaque, a sticky substance on your teeth that contains bacteria and can cause gum disease.
- If you are vomiting frequently, try rinsing your mouth with a teaspoon of baking soda mixed with water instead of brushing your teeth directly after vomiting. When stomach acids repeatedly come into contact with teeth, it can cause tooth enamel to wear away.
- Drink plenty of water that contains fluoride.

For Baby: It's Never Too Soon to Start Caring for Your Baby's Dental Health

A baby's 20 primary (baby) teeth are already present in the jaw at birth and usually begin coming through the gums around 4 to 6 months of age. Most children have a full set of 20 primary teeth by the time they are 3 years old. Tooth decay is the most frequent childhood disease, but it's also very preventable. The most common cause of tooth decay in young children is frequent, prolonged exposure of the teeth to sugary drinks. Here are some tips to avoid tooth decay:

- Put only plain water, formula, milk or breast milk in bottles. Avoid filling bottles with liquids such as sweetened water, fruit juice or soft drinks.
- Never put your baby to bed with a bottle. Even when it's breast milk or formula, it can still decay teeth.
- Use clean pacifiers — don't dip them in sugar or honey.
- Try not to share saliva with the baby by using the same spoon or licking a pacifier to clean it. Tooth decay can begin with cavity-causing bacteria being passed from the mother to the baby.
- Wipe your baby's gums with a washcloth.

Primary Teeth — Eruption Chart





Tips to Clean Your Baby's Teeth

- Begin cleaning your baby's mouth during the first few days by wiping the gums with a clean, moist gauze pad or washcloth after each feeding.
- When your child's teeth begin to come in until age 3, brush the teeth gently twice a day with a child-size toothbrush and a very small amount of fluoride toothpaste around the size of a grain of rice.
- For children 3 to 6-years-old, brush their teeth twice a day with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Be sure they spit out the toothpaste.
- Until you're comfortable that your child can brush on his or her own, continue to brush their teeth twice a day with a child-size toothbrush and a small amount of fluoride toothpaste. When your child has two teeth that touch, you should begin flossing their teeth daily.

As soon as your child's first tooth appears, it's time to schedule a dental visit. The ADA recommends that the first dental visit take place within six months after the first tooth appears, but no later than a child's first birthday. Don't wait for them to start school or until there's a dental emergency.

Getting into a routine early will put your baby on the right path to a healthy smile from the start.

Thank you to the following sponsors for providing funding for Healthy Smiles from the Start

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For more information about taking care of your mouth and teeth, visit **MouthHealthy.org**, the ADA's website just for patients.

