



**Iowa Department of Public Health
Bureau of Oral & Health Delivery Systems
Oral Health Center**

1-866-528-4020
www.idph.state.ia.us/hpcdp/oral_health.asp

Does your child have health insurance?
Call 1-800-257-8563 to find out more information
about low cost or no cost health insurance.

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Why Worry About Baby Teeth?

Strong baby teeth allow children to speak clearly, smile with confidence, and eat food properly to help their bodies grow. Baby teeth also save space for permanent teeth. Cavities are an infection and can be painful, making it hard for infants and children to learn and develop normally. If your children have cavities, they may also lose teeth too soon.

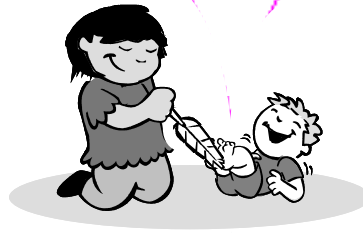


Can My Baby Get Cavities?

Babies and toddlers can get cavities as soon as teeth erupt in the mouth. This is usually around 6 months of age.

Cavities occur when germs in the mouth use sugar and starches from food and drinks to make an acid. The acid weakens tooth enamel. After many acid attacks, a cavity (hole) forms in the tooth.

It is important for the whole family to have healthy mouths. The germs that cause cavities may be passed to your baby's mouth through saliva-sharing behaviors like sharing a spoon or cleaning off a pacifier in your mouth and then giving it to your baby.



Tips to Care for Your Baby's Teeth

Before teeth erupt, wipe your baby's gums with a wet washcloth at least once a day.

Once your baby has teeth, brush them with a soft infant-sized toothbrush at least once a day, preferably before bed.

Help brush children's teeth until they are 7 or 8 years old.

Be sure your child drinks fluoridated water.

Use a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste for children 2 years of age and older.

Floss your child's teeth as soon as they touch each other. Help with flossing until your child is 8 or 9 years old.

Choose healthy snacks – fruits, vegetables, cheese, and yogurt.

Offer sugary and starchy foods and drinks at mealtimes only.

If needed, use a pacifier or a bottle with water to put your baby to sleep.

Wean your baby from the bottle by the time they are 1 year old.

Start getting regular checkups with a dentist when your baby is 1 year old.

Keep your mouth healthy so cavity-causing germs are not passed from your mouth to your baby.

