

Child Dental Health Month is here! Did you know that your children's teeth are at risk for decay as soon as they start to appear? Tooth decay in infants is also known as Baby Bottle Tooth Decay. It typically affects the top front teeth but, other teeth can also be affected. Keep in mind that tooth decay is preventable by cleaning your child's teeth properly. According to the American Dental Association:

- Begin cleaning your baby's mouth during the first few days after birth by wiping the gums with a clean, moist gauze pad or washcloth.
- When your child's teeth begin to come in, brush them gently with a child-size toothbrush and water. A baby's front four teeth usually push through the gums at about six months of age, although some children don't have their first tooth until twelve or fourteen months.
- For children older than 2, brush their teeth with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Be sure they spit out the toothpaste. (Ask your child's dentist or physician if you are considering using fluoride toothpaste before age 2.)
- Until you are comfortable that your child can brush on his or her own, continue to brush your child's teeth twice a day with a child-sized toothbrush and a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. When your child has two teeth that touch, you should begin flossing their teeth daily.

Many parents believe that a child's baby teeth aren't really important because they will lose them in a few years anyway. However, when a baby tooth is lost too soon, the permanent teeth can drift into the empty space and make it difficult for other adult teeth to find room when they come in later, causing crooked or crowded adult teeth. This is a good reason to start infants off with good oral care and teach good dental hygiene habits early in life. The American Dental Association recommends that parents take children to a dentist no later than their first birthday and then as directed by their dentist.

If you have questions or concerns, your dentist is the best source of information about your child's dental care. You can also visit the American Dental Association website at [www.mouthhealthy.org](http://www.mouthhealthy.org) for additional information and tips.