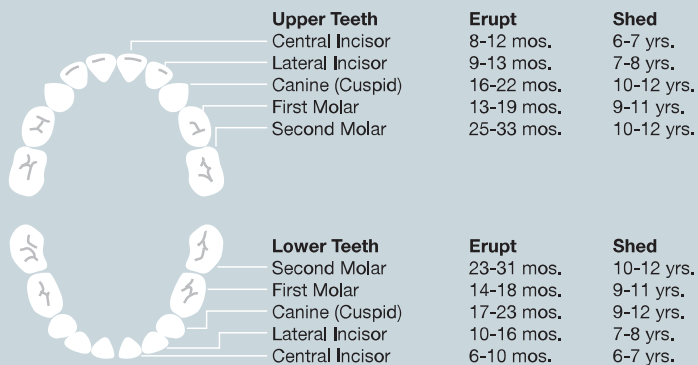


A child's first set of teeth are called **primary** or **baby teeth**. Babies usually **start cutting teeth** when they are **around six months old**. All **20 primary teeth** are usually in by age **three**. The **permanent teeth** start to come in by age **six**, with most of these in place by the age **13**.

Primary Teeth:



Tips you should follow...

- Breastfeeding is best for babies.
- Use a soft-bristled toothbrush or damp, clean cloth to clean your baby's first teeth.
- Plain water is the best drink between meals and before sleep.
- Visit the dentist.



Health and Community Services

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KEEPING BABY'S TEETH HEALTHY

Oral Health Tips
for Your Baby



Health and Community Services

It is never too early to start caring for your baby's teeth...

As soon as you see teeth in your baby's mouth, you can use a soft-bristled baby toothbrush or a damp, clean cloth to clean them. As your child gets older, you should clean their teeth with them, watching what they do and helping when they need it. Children need your help with toothbrushing until age seven or older. Teeth should be brushed at least twice a day. Brushing before bed is the most important time.



What should I use?

Before the age of three, use only a smear of fluoride toothpaste. After the age of three, a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste should be used. Try to have your child spit the toothpaste out and wipe off any excess. Toothpastes flavoured for children are fine, just make sure you keep the tube out of reach of children. Swallowing too much fluoride toothpaste can cause spots on the permanent teeth. Teeth should be brushed at least twice a day. After meals and at bedtime is best.

Brushing does not clean between the teeth. Dental floss is a special kind of thread that should be used once a day to clean between teeth that touch. There are special floss holders for children that can make the job easier.

Feeding your baby...

Tooth decay (cavities) is the most common dental problem in children. To prevent cavities, keeping teeth clean and eating healthy foods can help. Visiting the dentist regularly can also help.

Sweet and sticky foods and drinks are the worst for teeth. The sugars in these foods are used by germs in the mouth to make acid. This acid makes holes or cavities in teeth. Any sweetened drinks such as soda pop, fruit punches or kool aid are not recommended for children. These can cause severe tooth decay.

Some healthy foods such as milk and fruit juices contain natural sugar that can damage teeth if left in the mouth too long. It is unsafe to put a baby to sleep with a bottle of milk or juice and it can cause cavities in the teeth because the natural sugars are touching the teeth for a long time. Plain water is the best drink to have in between meals and before sleep.

What's best for my baby?

Breastfeeding is the best for babies. Exclusive breastfeeding of your baby until 6 months of age and continuing beyond with the addition of solid foods is recommended by the Canadian Pediatric Society. However, extensive, frequent breastfeeding throughout the night after the teeth appear may increase the risk of cavities. Removing the breast from the child's mouth when feeding is finished will help to reduce the chance of dental cavities.

Pacifiers can also interfere with successful breastfeeding if used too early or as a replacement for feeding. If pacifiers are used, never dip or coat the pacifier in a sweet solution to make it taste better. Also, a parent should not place the pacifier in their own mouth to clean or moisten it because bacteria from the parent's mouth will end up in the child's mouth. Your child should stop any pacifier or thumbsucking habits by the time they are 4-5 years old because the sucking can cause crooked second teeth. Ask your dentist or health care provider for help to reduce or stop using a pacifier.

When to visit the dentist?

Some children have cavities by age one! The first checkup by the dentist is recommended by the first birthday and, in most cases, the teeth should be checked every six months after that. The first few dental visits are so the dentist can look at your child's teeth and talk to you about taking care of them. Cleanings and other treatments usually start when your child is about age three. Regular checkups are important to prevent problems and to fix small problems before they become big ones.

