

Tooth Decay in Young Children

Tooth decay in young children is a serious dental condition that can occur as soon as the first tooth comes through the gum. It begins as white marks or lines that progressively become larger, turning yellow or brown. It can be a devastating condition that often requires hospitalisation and dental treatment under general anaesthesia.

What causes tooth decay in young children?

- 'Comfort sucking' on a bottle with something sweet in it. For example:
 - putting your baby to bed with a bottle with something sweet in it like juice, milk or formula, soft drink or cordial
 - allowing your child to suck on a bottle for a long time with something sweet in it.
- Eating lots of sugary and sticky foods like lollies, biscuits, cakes, chocolate, muesli bars, ice cream. These are 'sometimes' foods and should be kept for special occasions like birthday parties. Any food that sticks to teeth increases the risk of tooth decay.
- Not brushing teeth every day with fluoride toothpaste, once they are 18 months old.

How can you prevent tooth decay?

- Breast feed your baby and **limit night time on-demand feeding** after 6 months.
- Put your baby to bed without a bottle.
- Only put breast milk or infant formula in feeding bottles and remove the bottle once your child has finished feeding.
- Start brushing when your baby gets his first tooth.
- Help children brush their teeth until they are 8 years old.
- Introduce a cup from 6 months of age.
- Wean children from the bottle at around 12 months.
- Provide healthy food and snacks ('everyday' food).
- Limit sweet, sugary food and snacks ('sometimes' food).
- Encourage water in-between meals. Tap water in Australia is safe. It contains fluoride, which helps protect teeth.

Dental Fact Sheet

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- Lift the lip to check for tooth decay.
- Take your child to a dental professional by the end of their 2nd year.

Interpreter Services

If you require assistance with contacting above services or translation, please call Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 13 14 50.

For other multilingual health information visit www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au