

sucking a sweetened nipple had been avoided, this tooth decay could have been prevented. Instead, this child is suffering from pain, dental infection, lack of proper nutrition and sleepless nights. Immediate and extensive dental care is now necessary.

An unborn baby's teeth begin to form around the age of five to six weeks. At birth, all the baby teeth are formed under the gums. The first baby teeth start appearing in the mouth around six months of age. They continue to appear until all 20 baby teeth are through, usually by 30 to 36 months.

Caring for your baby's teeth and mouth should begin immediately after birth and continue for a lifetime. After each feeding or nursing, your baby's gum pads should be wiped with a clean damp cloth to remove any remaining milk residue. As teeth start to appear, this care must continue. Make sure that you wipe off or brush residue and plaque from all teeth surfaces (inside and out) after each feeding.

A child being put down for a rest, day or night, should not be given a bottle of milk, juice or carbonated beverage, nor a soother dipped in honey, syrup or jam. If your child needs a bottle, use only plain water.

If plaque and residue are not cleaned from your baby's teeth after each feeding, the risk of decay is very high. If your child's teeth are exposed to any form of sugar (including sugar in milk) while asleep, the risk of developing baby bottle tooth decay is also very high. When the two factors exist together – plaque left on the teeth and teeth exposed to sugar all day long or when the child is asleep – the risk of tooth decay is extremely high.

Baby bottle tooth decay is as serious as other childhood infectious diseases. This type of decay can start shortly after the first baby teeth start appearing in the baby's mouth. Sometimes white spots or lines, or yellow brownish areas on the inside or outside of the top front teeth are seen. Later on, the disease can spread to the bottom front and the back teeth.

In this situation, parents are often told or think:

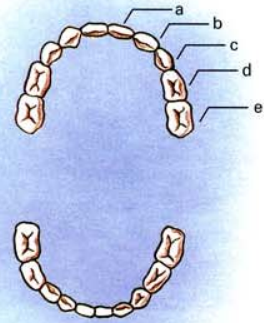
- The child is too young to have the teeth fixed.
- Wait until your child gets older. The teeth can be fixed when your child is three to four years old.
- Don't worry, these are only baby teeth and they will fall out.



Baby Teeth



- a upper central incisor 8-10 months
- b lateral incisor 8-10 months
- c canine (cuspid) 16-20 months
- d 1st molar 20-24 months
- e 2nd molar 20-24 months



Regardless of tooth decay problems, honey should never be given to children less than one year of age, as there is a risk of botulism food poisoning.

All of these statements are wrong. A child needs baby teeth to chew food and have a healthy smile. If you see anything in your child's mouth that you are concerned about, see a professional who treats children. If your dentist does not provide care for young children, ask for a referral to a child dental specialist. Children are never too young to have their teeth checked! While prevention is best, early detection and treatment of baby bottle tooth decay is very important.

Once tooth decay begins, it needs to be treated immediately. If it progresses to the point where your child has pain or has dental abscesses, the necessary dental care will most likely need to be done with a general anaesthetic. Use of anaesthetics can put your child at some risk and can be costly.

Your goal is to prevent the occurrence of baby bottle tooth decay. This is a preventable dental disease.

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