



A Quick Guide to Early Childhood Dental Care

Good Oral Health Starts Early!

At Delta Dental, we realize how important it is to begin promoting good oral health at an early age. That's why we put together this guide especially for you and your children. While you take care of them in every other way, let us help you with their oral health.

0-6 months

The appearance of primary (baby) teeth usually begins when children are about 6 months old. The front four teeth usually erupt first. It's important to help your baby form healthy teeth. Healthy baby teeth are all one color. If you see spots or stains on any teeth, take your baby to a dentist.

- Ask your dentist for information about teething.
- Use a washcloth with a small amount of water to clean your child's erupting teeth twice a day.
- Ask your dentist about fluoride supplementation (Bottled water does not usually contain fluoride.)
- Don't let your child have a bottle in bed or before going to sleep.

7-11 months

Lower incisors erupt first at about 8 months and upper incisors at about 10 months. As your baby starts to eat soft foods, include healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables. In addition:

- Ask your dentist for information about teething.
- Use a washcloth with a small amount of water to clean your child's erupting teeth twice a day.
- Ask your dentist about fluoride supplementation (Bottled water does not usually contain fluoride.)
- Don't let your child have a bottle in bed or before going to sleep.

12-24 months

First molars begin to erupt at about 16 months, canines at 20 months. The critical period for enamel formation of permanent incisors is between 18 and 24 months. Strong enamel helps prevent cavities. Healthy foods make enamel strong.

- Reinforce sound nutrition – limit sweetened fruit drinks and non-nutritious snack foods.
- Be sure your child's diet is balanced with foods from the five major food groups:
 - Breads, cereals and other grain products
 - Fruits
 - Vegetables
 - Meat, poultry, fish, beans, eggs
 - Milk, cheese, yogurt
- Visit the dentist to have

25-36 months

Second molars usually erupt at approximately 25 months. They are the last of the primary (baby) teeth to erupt.

- Regular dental visits should continue.
- Evaluate fluoride supplements – an increase is generally recommended at age 3.
- Teach your child how to brush their own teeth and supervise them while they do it twice a day – preferably once in the morning and once before bedtime.
- Continue to promote sound nutrition.
- Replace your child's toothbrush every two months or when the bristles are frayed or worn.

Risk Factors for Infant Cavities:

- Sibling dental decay before the age of 5.
- Use of a bottle at nap time or before going to sleep.
- Excessive sweets, juice or sticky foods in diet.
- Inadequate routine brushing and cleaning.
- Insufficient fluoride in water or lack of supplements.
- Chalky white spots on teeth.

*Fluoride is Important to Your Child's Health**

Fluoride in water has been proven to reduce cavities by up to 50%.

Fluoride:

- Helps developing enamel become strong and resistant to decay.
- Slows the growth of bacteria.
- Is a mineral that makes your child's tooth enamel harder and more resistant to decay.
- Is found naturally in some of the foods your child eats (fish, grape juice, green leafy vegetables).

Many communities now have fluoride added to the public water supplies to give residents the proper amounts they need to ward off cavities. Talk to your dentist or hygienist to see if your child needs more fluoride. They can prescribe fluoride supplements to help protect your child's teeth against decay.

**Check with your dentist or pediatrician before using toothpaste with fluoride on children under 2 years of age.*

