

How can I keep my child's mouth healthy?



The first visit to the dentist should be at 12 months of age. Schedule regular visits as your dentist recommends. Children with dental problems caused by injury, disease, or a developmental problem should be seen by a dentist right away.

If a tooth is knocked out or broken take your child to a dentist as soon as possible. Place the tooth in milk until you get there.



Make sure your child's teeth are brushed at least twice a day for two minutes, using fluoride-containing toothpaste. Up to age 6, toothpaste should contain at least 1000ppm of fluoride and from age 6 it should contain up to 1500ppm of fluoride.



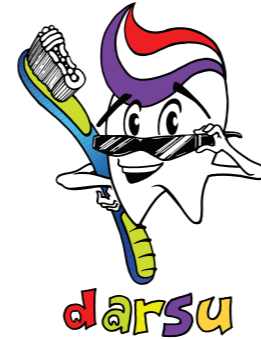
Do not share spoons and forks or cups with babies as harmful bacteria can be transferred from your mouth to theirs.



Give your child healthy foods. Avoid sugary foods and drinks in between meals and at night.



Dummies should not be used after 18 months of age. Sucking of thumbs and fingers should be discouraged. If the child can't stop, seek advice from your dentist.



Teeth for life

General information on mouth health in children

Dental  **Public Health Unit**
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 **Health Promotion & Disease Prevention Directorate**
Tel: 2326 6000, www.healthpromotion.gov.mt


OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
MINISTRY FOR HEALTH

A Healthy Mouth for Your Child



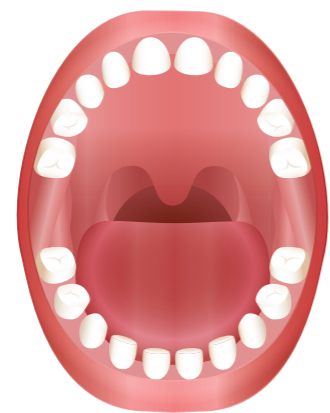
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A **child's mouth care** begins during the mother's pregnancy, as baby teeth start forming before birth. If you are pregnant, make sure to eat a balanced diet and take prenatal vitamins as recommended. It is important for pregnant women to have a dental check up. Dental treatment during pregnancy is safe.

Your child's first teeth usually start appearing at about 6 months of age, although the timing varies from child to child. All the 20 baby teeth should be present by age 3.

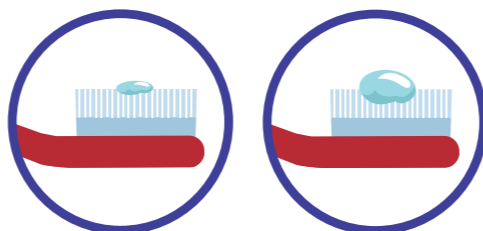
Baby teeth



Proper mouth care begins before a baby's first tooth appears

Cleaning your child's mouth

Start cleaning your child's mouth with damp cotton wool or gauze from birth. You can continue to do this or use a finger brush when the first teeth appear. As more teeth erupt, use a soft age appropriate toothbrush.



Use a smear (the size of a grain of rice) of toothpaste up to age 3 and a small pea-sized amount from then onwards. Up to age 6, toothpaste should contain at least 1000ppm of fluoride and from age 6 it should contain up to 1500ppm of fluoride. Replace the toothbrush as soon as the bristles start to look worn or at least every 3 months.

Encourage your child to watch you brush your teeth. For the first few years brush his/her teeth yourself, but let him/her brush too. Your child should know how to brush his/her own teeth properly twice a day at about age 8 but continue to supervise and check for proper cleaning.

Use chewable disclosing tablets from time to time to check your child's brushing. These tablets, found in pharmacies, will colour any deposits left on teeth after brushing.



Food and Drinks

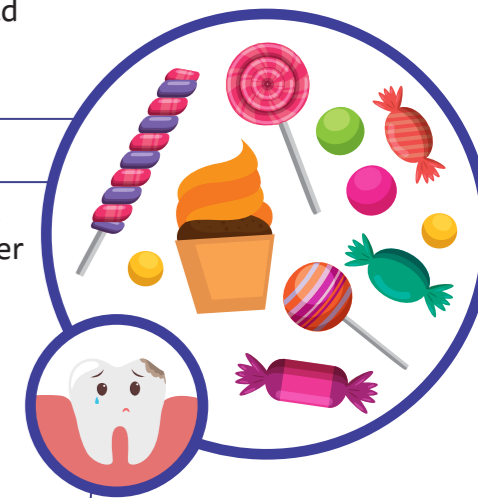
Exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months is recommended. Encourage your baby to begin drinking from a cup at about 6 months of age, when complimentary foods are introduced.

If your child is thirsty during the night, only give water as a drink after 6 months of age. Do not put your child to bed with a bottle of milk, formula, juice, lemonade or other products that contain sugar, as these can cause tooth decay.

Read food ingredient labels as one will find a lot of hidden sugars e.g. sucrose, glucose and fructose in readymade foods. Avoid giving your child sugary snacks.

Sugary snacks which can damage teeth

Wafers	Flavoured Yoghurts	Flavoured Milk
Chocolates	Sugary Cereals	Flavoured Water
Biscuits	Cereal Bars	Fruit Juices
Mints	Barbecue Sauce	Iced Tea
Sweets	Lollipops	Squashes
Sponges	Ice Creams	Fizzy Drinks
Cakes	Dried Fruits	Sports Drinks
Ketchup	Sugary Chewing Gums	Hot Chocolate



Give your child nutritious foods such as whole grains, vegetables and fruits.

