

# Baby bottle tooth decay

## What is baby bottle tooth decay?

Decay (cavities) in the teeth of infants and toddlers.

## What causes baby bottle tooth decay?

When teeth are exposed to sugar frequently or for long periods of time, cavities often result. In babies or young children, this often occurs when a child is put to bed with a bottle or when a bottle is used as a pacifier.

## What teeth does it affect?

It can affect any tooth but most commonly affects the upper front teeth.

## Ways to prevent baby bottle tooth decay

### Don't share saliva (spit)

- Avoid sharing spoons, or cleaning your child's pacifier with your mouth.
- After eating, wipe your baby's gums with a clean, damp washcloth.



### Supervise brushing

- Help your child brush until they can spit and not swallow toothpaste.
- This is usually until they are 6 or 7 years old.



### No sleeping with bottle

- Finish the bottle before nap time or bedtime.
- Wash the baby's gums and teeth with a clean, damp washcloth after the bottle.



### Use a clean pacifier

- Don't put sugar or honey on pacifier.
- Don't clean pacifier with your own mouth.



### Brush twice a day

- Start brushing as soon as the first tooth erupts.
- Use a child-size toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste.
- Use a rice-sized drop of toothpaste for children under age 3. For children 3 to 6 years old use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste.



### Milk only in bottle

- Bottles are for formula, milk, or breast milk only.
- Don't fill the bottle with sugar water, juice, or soda.



### Encourage healthy habits

- Have your child use a cup by the first birthday.
- Eat healthy foods and drinks. Snacking in moderation.



### See a dentist

- As soon as you see your child's first tooth, schedule a dental visit.



Utah Department of  
**Health & Human**  
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Resource: <https://www.mouthhealthy.org/all-topics-a-z/tooth-decay-with-baby-bottles>