



# BABY teeth



‘everything You  
need to **KNOW**’

**Your baby’s first teeth** (known as primary teeth) are just as important as their permanent teeth. They help your child to learn to chew, speak properly and most importantly, these teeth reserve the space in your child’s gums for the eruption of their permanent teeth.

**When will your baby start teething?**

The appearance of primary teeth is commonly called ‘teething’. Primary teeth start to form in your child’s jawbone before birth. A baby’s first primary tooth usually erupts at about six months of age. However, this can occur as early as birth or as late as your child’s first birthday. The average child has a full set of 20 primary teeth by the age of two to three years.

# time for teething

## ‘How can you tell if your baby is teething?’

**Many babies** experience some discomfort during teething. Signs and symptoms of teething can include:

- Frequent crying and crankiness
- A mild fever
- Reddened cheeks and drooling
- Loss of or reduced appetite
- Mild diarrhoea
- Sucking or gnawing on toys
- Pulling the ear on the same side as the erupting tooth

It is extremely important not to ignore symptoms such as fever and diarrhoea in your child. If these symptoms occur, seek medical advice to eliminate other reasons for the symptoms.

## ‘How can you relieve the symptoms?’

**Signs and symptoms** may appear and disappear over several days. Ask your dentist or pharmacist for advice before using any pain relief specifically created for babies and toddlers.

- Wash your hands and gently rub your baby’s gums with a clean finger.
- Give your baby a teething ring or wet washcloth to bite. Teething rings can be chilled in the refrigerator before being used to help manage discomfort associated with teething (do not put teething rings in the freezer)
- Give your baby non-sweetened rusks to chew on



## did you know...

**Thumb sucking** is a natural reflex in babies and young children. Most children lose interest in thumb sucking and dummies at two to four years of age.

Children who continue to suck their thumb or fingers after their permanent teeth have appeared risk developing crooked teeth, particularly if the sucking is forceful or frequent. Also, speech defects may arise, especially with “s” and “th” sounds.

Gently encourage your child to give up thumb sucking. See your dentist for advice if your child cannot stop thumb sucking by the end of their first year at school. In rare cases, referral to a child psychologist may be helpful.

• **Some medicines** contain sugar for taste. If your child is prescribed medicine, ask your doctor if this can be sugar free

• **Fluoride** is a natural mineral that strengthens teeth and protects against decay. Most towns and cities in Australia add fluoride to the water supply at recommended levels. Bottled water doesn’t usually contain enough fluoride to offer protection against tooth decay. Some home water filters remove fluoride from tap water. Storage- tank water does not contain fluoride. If your child drinks most of their water from bottled or filtered water or tanks, then talk to your dentist about your child’s fluoride needs. If necessary, your dentist can apply ‘topical’ fluoride to their teeth, which has been proven to reduce childhood tooth decay

• **Less well known** is that soft drinks, along with fruit juices, cordials and sports drinks often have high acid levels, and can play a major role in causing tooth erosion

# eating for healthy teeth!

**Did you know** that as soon as your baby develops their first tooth, they are at risk of dental decay, which is known as Early Childhood Caries (ECC)? Diet plays an important role in the health of your child's teeth, so developing healthy eating habits early in life will help your child form the building blocks for strong and healthy adult teeth:

- If your baby has a breastfeed or bottle of milk before bed, gently wipe down their teeth with a moistened cloth before putting them to sleep
- Don't allow your child to take a bottle of milk or other sugary drinks to bed. When they are older, it is fine to place a glass of water on their bedside table in case they get thirsty overnight
- If your baby needs to suck on something to settle them to sleep, offer a dummy rather than a bottle
- Encourage your baby to learn to drink from a toddler cup from 12 months of age, as breast and bottle feeding regularly throughout the day or night once a child is over 12 months can contribute to ECC.



## 'What food contributes to dental decay?'

**Foods high in refined** carbohydrates (sugar) feed the destructive bacteria in your baby's or toddler's mouth. The bacteria produce acid, which destroys your child's teeth. Be sure to check the nutritional information panel on all packaged foods to help work out which foods and drinks have high carbohydrate and sugar levels. While it's unrealistic to completely cut these foods out of your child's diet, below are some tips to help minimise dental decay in your child's teeth:

- Enjoy two healthy snacks a day such as fruit and a small portion of cheese – milk and hard cheeses such as cheddar have protective qualities to help prevent dental decay
- Offer your child a diet high in fresh fruits and vegetables, wholegrain cereals, lean meats and dairy products
- Limit sugary snacks such as lollies, fruit and muesli bars, biscuits, dried fruit, cordials, juices and soft drink
- You need to make sure you clean your child's teeth morning and night, as many healthy foods still contain high amounts of sugar and can cause the growth of dental plaque (bacteria).

## toddler taming

**If your toddler** resists teeth cleaning or struggles to sit still for two minutes, try these suggestions:

- Consider a battery-powered tooth brush, which adds novelty to cleaning their teeth
- Sing nursery rhymes or play a favourite song while you help your child brush their teeth
- Offer a reward every time your toddler allows you to brush for two minutes
- Some toddlers like to be independent so it is a good idea for them to use one toothbrush while you use another one and take turns at brushing

# time for brushing

**Babies and toddlers** are at just as much risk of dental decay as an older child or adult. By establishing good oral hygiene habits early, your child will be well equipped to have healthy teeth for life.

## ‘when should you start?’

Once your baby’s primary teeth start to appear, you should use a toothbrush specially designed for babies, to gently massage their teeth and gums. Up to the age of 18 months, your baby’s teeth should be brushed with plain water, once a day after the last feed in the evening.

## ‘when should you introduce toothpaste?’

There are special low-fluoride toothpastes that have been developed for young children. These can be introduced from around the age of 18 months. Only a smear of toothpaste is needed, and encourage your child to spit out the excess toothpaste.

## ‘learning to brush’

By age 3 introduce brushing teeth twice a day – in the morning after their breakfast and in the evening just before bed. From around the age of 4 children should begin to learn how to brush and care for their own teeth with your assistance.

Move the toothbrush gently in small circles to clean the front surfaces of your child’s teeth. Avoid side-to-side scrubbing, which can damage your child’s teeth and gums. Brush the biting and grinding surfaces of back teeth with a firm back and forth motion, and be sure to clean every surface of every tooth.

## ‘how long should you brush your child’s teeth for?’

The time taken to brush can be increased slowly until the baby is able to tolerate a two minute brushing as a toddler.

## ‘when should you first visit the dentist?’

Your child’s first visit to the dentist should be within 6 months of the eruption of their first tooth, or by their first birthday.



### Opening hours

Monday to Thursday 8am to 5pm  
Friday 8am to 4pm  
Closed for lunch 12.30pm to 1.30pm

### Location

28 Paxton Street North Ward Q 4810

### Contact Details

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Web [dentistonpaxton.com](http://dentistonpaxton.com)

## ‘should you floss your child’s teeth?’

**Yes, but wait until your child is about two and a half years old.** Flossing helps remove decay causing bacteria from between their teeth and keeps their gums healthy.

Slide the floss between your child’s teeth and gently work it up and down, against the surfaces of each tooth. Do not snap the floss down between the teeth as the floss may hurt their gums. After flossing, have your child rinse with water, then brush.

If you find flossing your child’s teeth difficult, ask your dentist to show you how to do it. Floss holders are available, which can make flossing easier for some children.

