



# BRIGHT LITTLE SMILES

Help your baby's smile sparkle by preventing baby bottle tooth decay. It's caused when babies are put to bed with a bottle containing a sweet liquid. Sugars present in the sweet liquid pool around teeth and gums and feed decay-causing bacteria. Continued exposure to these sugars can lead to long-term issues that last into adulthood.

**YOUR BABY'S FIRST DENTIST VISIT  
SHOULD BE BETWEEN 6 AND 12 MONTHS.**

### HEALTHY TEETH START EARLY

Prevent baby bottle tooth decay with these tips.

- › **Wipe your baby's gums.** Use a clean piece of gauze or washcloth after each feeding.
- › **Clean your baby's teeth early.** It's best to start as soon as the first tooth begins to appear.
- › **Wean your toddler off the bottle.** Children should drink all liquids from a cup by the time they are about 12 months of age.
- › **Don't put your child to bed with a bottle.** Try a pacifier instead. Avoid dipping your child's pacifier in anything sweet. Adding milk, juice, sugar water or any other sweet liquid can cause major problems.
- › **Visit a dentist.** Your baby's first dentist visit should be between 6 and 12 months.

### KNOW THE CULPRITS

- › Bottles containing milk, formula, fruit juice or soda
- › Pacifiers dipped in honey or anything sweet
- › Even breast-fed infants can have similar issues if they have prolonged feeding habits.

### DAMAGING EFFECTS

- › Increased decay on the upper front teeth
- › Missing teeth (due to extraction)
- › Crooked or damaged adult teeth
- › Poor eating habits
- › Speech problems

### MAKING CHANGES

Talk to your pediatrician to determine exactly what kind of changes are best to wean your baby off the bottle. You can discuss:

- › Gradually diluting bottles with water over two or three weeks
- › Only providing water in your child's bottle during bedtime
- › Substituting a dentist-recommended pacifier instead of a bottle at bedtime

### BOTTLE-LESS BEDTIME

Try these tips for getting to bed without a bottle.

- › Sing or play quiet music.
- › Share a story aloud.
- › Use a soft blanket or teddy bear.
- › Put the baby to bed awake to help him or her settle down alone.
- › Gently rock your baby or pat his or her back.



### MAKE HEALTHY SMILES FUN

*Grin! for Kids* is a new, free kid-friendly resource from Delta Dental. With wacky tooth trivia, jokes and craft projects you can do together – this special issue of our oral health e-magazine offers a lively approach to learning about oral health.

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