

# ORAL HEALTH: INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN

## A child's primary, or "baby" teeth are extremely important!

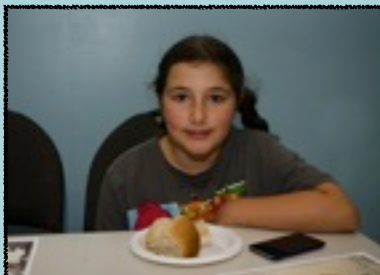
- Baby teeth are necessary for development and the ability to eat a healthy, balanced diet.
- Baby teeth hold space for permanent "adult" teeth.
- Early loss of baby teeth due to decay or infection can result in crowding of adult teeth.
- Behaviour, quality of life and confidence are affected when a child is in pain.



- Children who develop cavities in their baby teeth are more likely to have cavities in their adult teeth.
- Tooth pain is one of the leading causes of missed time from school and difficulty in concentrating at school.

## Oral diseases can prevent a child from thriving.

Consequences of oral disease in children can include delayed growth and development, malnutrition, and pain and loss of sleep.



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## How & When Should You Start to Brush Your Child's Teeth?

- Before teeth come in, wipe your infant's gums with a clean, wet washcloth.
- As soon as the first tooth comes in, it should be brushed with a soft toothbrush. Gums should still be wiped with a cloth.
- Caregivers should brush a child's teeth until the child can colour between the lines or tie their own shoelaces. Even after this, caregivers should watch children brush and help them if necessary.
- Teeth should be brushed at least two times a day.
- The most important time to brush teeth is before bed. Only water should be given after teeth have been brushed!



## WHEN SHOULD A CHILD START TO SEE A DENTIST?

- \* *Infants should have their first visit to a dental health professional (dentist, dental therapist or dental hygienist) within 6 months of the eruption of their first baby tooth, or by 1 year of age- whichever comes first.*



## When should toothpaste with fluoride be used to brush a child's teeth?

- Children **under 3** years of age should have teeth brushed by a caregiver twice a day, using a smear (**rice grain size**) of fluoridated toothpaste if they are at risk of developing cavities.
- Children aged **3 and older** should have teeth brushed by a caregiver twice a day, using a small amount (**pea size**) of fluoridated toothpaste.
  - ▶ This includes all children living in communities without fluoridated water, eating foods and drinks that cause cavities, or with caregivers who have cavities.
- If a dental health professional determines that your child is at low risk of developing cavities, they may recommend brushing twice a day with just water or non-fluoridated toothpaste.



\*Rice grain size smear of toothpaste (left) and a pea size amount of toothpaste (right)

## References

Oral health during pregnancy and early childhood: Evidence-based guidelines for health professionals. Publication. Feb. 2010. CDA Foundation. July 2013 <Available at: [http://www.cdafoundation.org/library/docs/poh\\_policy\\_brief.pdf](http://www.cdafoundation.org/library/docs/poh_policy_brief.pdf)>.

Canadian Dental Association. CDA Position on Use of Fluoride in Caries Prevention. 2010; Available at: [http://www.cda-adc.ca/\\_files/position\\_statements/fluoride.pdf](http://www.cda-adc.ca/_files/position_statements/fluoride.pdf). Accessed 06/24, 2013.

## Additional Resources

Parent Health Education Resource Working Group. Loving Care: Birth to 6 Months. [Halifax]: Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, 2012.

Parent Health Education Resource Working Group. Loving Care: 6 to 12 Months. [Halifax]: Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, 2012.

Parent Health Education Resource Working Group. Loving Care: 1 to 3 Years. [Halifax]: Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, 2012.

Parent Health Education Resource Working Group. Loving Care: Parents and Families. [Halifax]: Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, 2012.

For access to the Loving Care series, visit: <http://novascotia.ca/dhw/lovingcare/>