

The Importance of Baby Teeth

- Eating
- Talking
- Smiling (appearance)
- Development of jaw and hold space for permanent teeth

Caring for your Baby's Mouth

- You should start to clean your baby's mouth soon after birth with a piece of gauze, soft cloth, or finger brush. This helps to clean the mouth, massage the gum, and ease teething discomfort.
- When teeth erupt, a wet cloth or soft tooth brush can be used to clean teeth.
- The best time to clean your child's mouth is after the last feeding of the day.

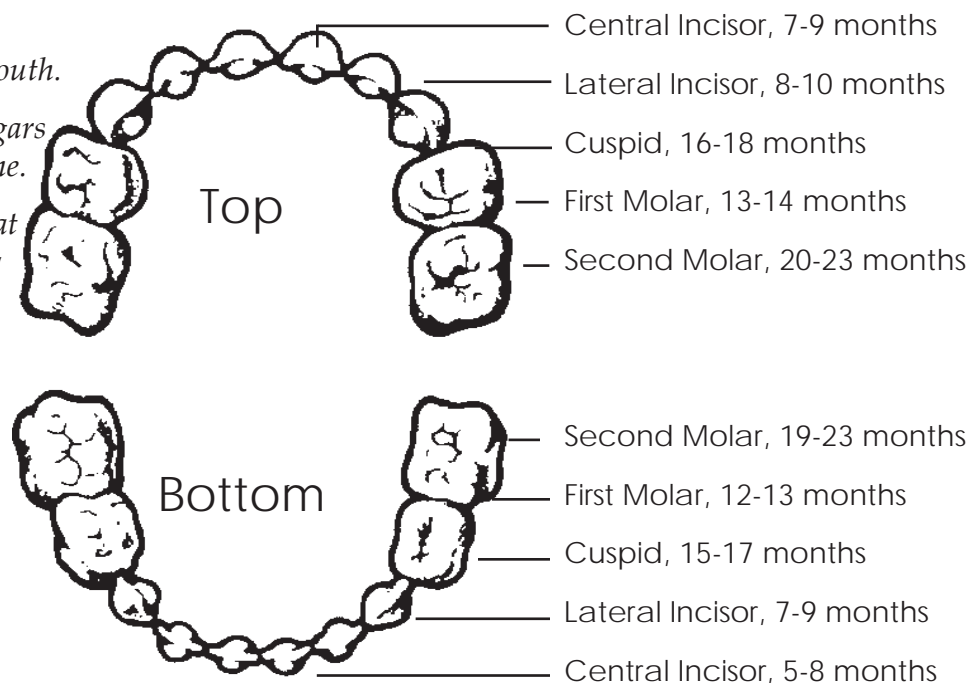
Tooth Decay

Baby's teeth are susceptible to decay from the first day they appear in the mouth.

Breast milk, cow's milk, formula, fruit juice and medications all contain sugars that can cause tooth decay if left in contact with teeth for long periods of time.

Allowing a child (baby) to have a bottle or sip-cup for long periods or sleep at the breast with milk pooled around their teeth, can lead to decay that is very damaging to baby's teeth. Tooth decay can be prevented by:

- 1) cleaning your child's teeth daily, especially at bedtime
- 2) giving plain water in sleep-time bottle
- 3) giving plain water when your child is thirsty instead of sweetened drinks
- 4) teach your child to drink directly from a cup starting at 6 to 9 months of age





Put Your Child to Bed Without a Bottle to Prevent Early Childhood Tooth Decay

If your child has become attached to the bottle, it may be a difficult habit to break. Your child may cry or fight giving up the bottle. Here are some suggestions:

- Dilute the liquid you usually put in the bedtime bottle until there is only water.
- Use a soother. Do NOT dip the soother in honey, syrup, or anything sweet.
- Give a security blanket or a teddy bear.
- Hold or rock your child.
- Have a musical mobile.
- Sing or play music.
- Give a back rub.
- Read or tell a story.

Begin teaching your baby to drink from a cup at 6 to 9 months of age. It may be messy, but it is worth the effort. Praise your child and make it a sharing time. Your child will love learning a new skill and may prefer drinking from a cup.

Should I be giving a fluoride supplement?

Due to the levels of natural fluoride in most Huron County drinking water, the Huron County Health Unit suggests that fluoride-containing toothpaste NOT be used for children under the age of 7 years. Children have a tendency to swallow excessive amounts of toothpaste while brushing and this can contribute to fluorosis of the teeth. Use only water, or a non-fluoridated toothpaste, up to age 7. After the age of 7, use a 'smear' or pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste.

