



# Helping Hands

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## DENTAL CARE FOR YOUR BABY

### TEETHING

Most babies will begin teething around six months of age and will have all 20 of their baby teeth by their second birthday. The week surrounding the eruption of a tooth, your child may have increased biting, drooling, sucking, gum rubbing, and irritability. During teething, comfort your baby with teething rings, a cold wet washcloth to bite on, or simply rub the baby's gums with a clean finger. Notify your pediatrician right away if the fever is above 101°F or is persistent. This is a symptom of a potentially serious illness and is not teething.

### CARE

Upon the eruption of the first tooth, begin brushing the teeth twice a day with a soft-bristled, small headed toothbrush dampened with water. Daily brushing of your baby's teeth should remain the caregiver's responsibility until fine motor skills are adequately developed to remove dental plaque, usually around 6-8 years of age. Your pediatric dentist will be able to guide you with positioning instructions and proper brushing techniques.

### DIET

Your baby should not fall asleep with a bottle. At-will nighttime breast-feeding should be avoided after the eruption of the first baby tooth. While the baby sleeps, the flow of saliva decreases. The liquids from the bottle are allowed to pool and remain around the teeth, inviting the acid attack, which causes cavities. Children should be weaned from the bottle as they approach their first birthday. Juices should only be offered in a regular cup. Drinking juice from a bottle or a sippy cup can be detrimental to your child's teeth.

### SUCKING HABITS

Sucking habits are perfectly normal for infants, and most children will stop their own between the ages of 2-4. Prolonged thumb, finger, or pacifier sucking can create crowded, crooked teeth and bite problems. Your pediatric dentist will monitor the way your child's teeth come in and jaws develop, and provide recommendations if the habit persists.

### EMERGENCIES

As your baby becomes a toddler and begins exploring the world around them, mouth injuries are likely to occur. If your child does fall and injure themselves, remain calm, apply pressure to the bleeding area, and contact your pediatric dentist. It is important to establish a relationship with a pediatric dentist early in your child's life, so you will have someplace to go where your child will already feel safe and the medical and dental history are well known.

### ROUTINE DENTAL CARE

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends "First visit by first birthday." Your child's first teeth usually will come in between 6 and 12 months of age. Early examination and preventative care and instructions by a pediatric dentist will get your child's smile off to a healthy start.