



# Helping Hands

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## THEY'RE NOT "JUST" BABY TEETH...

- Dental Caries is the number one chronic disease of childhood. It is five times more common than asthma.
- Untreated dental caries (cavities) on primary teeth can enlarge very quickly. This is due to the thin outer enamel of the tooth and the large nerve and blood vessel supply (pulp) inside the tooth.
- The typical age at which the last baby molar is lost is around 12-13 years old.
- Some primary (baby) teeth do not have a permanent successor developing underneath, for a variety of reasons. In these instances, the primary tooth may require being maintained as long as possible and into adulthood.
- Permanent teeth typically begin to erupt at approximately six years of age.
- If the dental caries and bacterial infection reaches the pulp of the tooth, it is able to access the root and bone surrounding the tooth. Once this occurs, a dental abscess can occur. They abscesses can become life threatening and require in-patient hospital treatment with IV antibiotics and emergent extraction of the tooth involved.
- The primary teeth are very important in the growth and development of the face and jaw structures. Early loss of these teeth can cause occlusion (bite) problems, impaction of permanent teeth due to space loss and numerous other spacing and growth concerns. This space loss can also occur with just the loss of tooth structure due to untreated large cavities alone. This can lead to the need for extensive orthodontic treatment.
- According to the Colorado Consumer Health Initiative, 78 million hours of school is missed annually in Colorado due to acute oral pain and infection in children. Tooth pain can also affect the student's ability to concentrate.
- Cavities are often sensitive to sweet, hot or cold foods. This can cause decreased appetite in children and in some cases, failure to thrive.
- If caries are not treated with restorations when they are small to moderate size, the cavities will progress and necessitate more extensive and costly treatment to repair.
- Cavities are a bacterial infection. When left untreated the bacteria multiplies. With more bacteria in the mouth, all of the teeth become more susceptible to developing cavities. This is especially a concern if there is untreated decay in the presence of erupting permanent teeth.
- If a cavity progresses to the point of a dental abscess, the abscess is an acidic liquid. The developing permanent teeth that are still in the bone and exposed to this can have damage, oftentimes significant, to the enamel of the permanent tooth.
- It can be considered by the state as negligent to as a parent or legal guardian, knowingly leave dental infections untreated.
- In extremely rare, unfortunate circumstances, children have passed away due to infection stemming from untreated cavities in teeth.