**How Can You Check Baby’s Teeth?**

Check your baby’s teeth each day when you clean their teeth and gums:

- Lay baby’s head on your lap
- Gently push back the lips
- Look at the front and back of all upper teeth, then all lower teeth
- If you see chalky white, brown or black spots on the teeth, take baby to the dentist

**What Should You Do?**

Take your child to a dentist by [age 1](#).

If you don’t have a dentist:

- Ask your child’s doctor for a referral
- Ask a friend, relative, or coworker
- If you have Medi-Cal, call Denti-Cal at 1-800-322-6384
- Call the California Dental Association at 1-800-CDA-SMILE (1-800-232-7645)
- Call your local Child Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP) Program at the county health department

**Prevent Tooth Decay in Babies and Toddlers**

Do you want this?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tooth decay</th>
<th>Unhealthy child - Tooth infection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Tooth decay" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Unhealthy child" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

or

Do you want this?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Healthy teeth and gums</th>
<th>Healthy child - Healthy teeth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Healthy teeth" /></td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Healthy child" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Baby Teeth Are Important**

- To Chew
- To Talk
- To Smile
- To Feel Good
- To Be Healthy
- To Save Room For Permanent Teeth
What Is Tooth Decay (Cavities)?

It is a disease that:
- Can destroy teeth
- Is caused by germs in the mouth
- Leads to pain and infection
- Can start as soon as the first tooth comes in (white line near gums)

How Does Tooth Decay Happen?

Germs + Sugar = Tooth Decay

Germs eat sugar, which makes acid that causes tooth decay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GERMS</th>
<th>SUGAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tooth decay germs can be</td>
<td>When sugar stays on teeth, tooth decay can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>passed from your mouth to</td>
<td>happen, especially if your child:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>your child’s mouth.</td>
<td>• Falls asleep with the bottle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sips from a bottle or cup all day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not share:</td>
<td>Sugar hides in:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cups</td>
<td>• Milk/Formula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Straws</td>
<td>• Cereal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Spoons/Forks</td>
<td>• Juice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Toothbrushes</td>
<td>• Soda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not “clean” pacifier</td>
<td>• Sweet drinks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with your mouth.</td>
<td>• Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cookies, Crackers, Chips</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What Can You Do To Protect Baby Teeth?

Take care of your own teeth:
- Brush with fluoride toothpaste and floss daily
- Visit your dentist at least once a year
- Limit sweet sticky foods and drinks
- Chew sugarless gum with “xylitol” after meals/snacks

Take care of baby’s teeth:
- Put only breast milk or formula in bottle
- Hold baby while feeding
- Put baby to bed without a bottle
- Brush teeth twice a day with a dot of fluoride toothpaste
- At 6 months, help baby drink from a cup
- Stop bottle feeding around 1st birthday
- Take baby to dentist by age one, then every 6-12 months
- Ask dentist or doctor about fluoride