



## Care for your Child's Teeth

All baby teeth will eventually be lost but it is very important to keep them healthy. Baby teeth will fall out over a period of 6 years (6-12 years of age). During this time, these teeth are essential for eating, speaking, positive self image, and maintaining space for the permanent teeth. Cavities will cause your child pain, lost time from school and even infections. Younger children needing dental treatment (less than 4 years), often require hospital care for treatment. Other than rare genetic disorders, there is no such thing as "soft" teeth. Cavities are completely preventable with good oral hygiene and a healthy diet. It is best to start these habits early.

### Teething

- Teething babies can experience the following: crankiness, drooling, diarrhea, low grade fever, pulling at ears, and biting things.
- First teeth to appear are usually the two bottom front teeth.
- Use a rubber teething ring that has been cooled in the fridge. Do not tie the ring around their neck.
- Do not use teething gels such as anbesol or orajel as babies will mostly swallow them.
- Do NOT give sugary drinks.



### Brushing

- A first tooth usually comes in at an average age of 8 months.
- You can begin brushing as soon as the first tooth erupts. A small baby toothbrush or a baby facecloth will suffice. It is a good idea to get the baby used to having something in their mouth by wiping their gums with a washcloth before teeth erupt.
- Do not use fluoridated toothpaste until the child can spit (usually 3-4 years of age). If toothpaste is swallowed, it can damage the permanent teeth that are growing below the gums.
- Brush teeth at least twice a day (morning and before bed) and floss once a day before bed.
- Children can brush their teeth first but the parent must brush them again as kids do not have the dexterity to properly brush. Children can brush their own teeth once they have the ability to tie their shoelaces but parents should still check.



## Diet

- A baby should NEVER take a bottle/sippy cup to bed with milk or juice.
- After nighttime breastfeeding sessions, a washcloth should be used to wipe the babies' mouth afterward. Breastmilk is healthy but it can cause extensive decay if it sits on the teeth all night long.
- Children should have a healthy and balanced diet. Young children enjoy fruit and vegetables as a snack if introduced early into the child's diet.
- It is best to avoid giving juices to babies, toddlers and preschoolers. Water and white milk are the drinks of choice. Juices act as fillers and do not have the same nutrient content as fresh whole fruit. If juice is given, it should be watered down and only given as a treat.

Information provided courtesy of the Dental Association of PEI

