

DENTAL HEALTH NEWS FROM THE NIH

A Healthy Mouth For Your Baby

(NAPSA)—When should I start cleaning my baby's teeth?

Clean the teeth as soon as they come in with a clean soft cloth or a baby's toothbrush, say dentists at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). And at about age 2, start using a small drop of fluoride toothpaste on the brush to clean your baby's teeth.

Why are baby teeth important—don't they just fall out?

Yes, baby teeth eventually fall out. But tooth decay in those teeth can cause pain for your baby. And baby teeth are important because they act as placeholders for adult teeth.

The dentists at NIH offer these suggestions for keeping your baby's teeth healthy:

- Protect your baby's teeth with fluoride. Fluoride protects teeth from tooth decay and helps heal early decay. Fluoride is added to the drinking water in some towns and cities. Ask your baby's dentist or doctor if your water has fluoride in it. If it doesn't, your dentist or doctor might prescribe fluoride drops for your baby.

- Check and clean your baby's teeth with a clean soft cloth or a baby's toothbrush. If you see spots or stains on the teeth, take your baby to the dentist.

- Feed your baby foods that do not have a lot of sugar in them. Give your child fruits and vegetables instead of candy and cookies.



BABY TEETH DO MATTER. Clean them with a soft cloth or baby toothbrush every day and tell your dentist about any problems.

- Prevent baby-bottle tooth decay. If you put your baby to bed with a bottle at night or at nap-time, fill it only with water. Milk, formula, juices and other sweet drinks such as soda all have sugar in them. Sucking on a bottle filled with liquids that have sugar in them can cause tooth decay.

- If your baby uses a pacifier, don't dip it in anything sweet such as sugar or honey.

- Ask your dentist when to bring in your child for his first visit. Usually, the dentist will want to see a child by his first birthday. At this first visit, your dentist can quickly check your child's teeth.