



## Baby Teeth are Important!

Tooth decay (cavities) is a serious problem that can destroy a child's baby teeth. It is the most common early childhood disease. Tooth decay can start as soon as teeth come into the mouth and may cause pain and infection. It is the main reason young children have surgery. Every child is at risk for tooth decay but **it can be prevented**.

### Children need healthy baby teeth to:

- Chew and eat food
- Sleep well
- Grow and develop
- Smile and feel good about how they look
- Speak well
- Have healthy adult (permanent) teeth

Use this guide to check the front, back and top of all teeth often when brushing

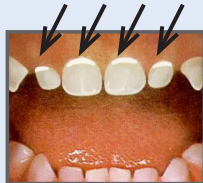
### Healthy Baby Teeth



Teeth are clean and gums are pink.

*See the back of this page for information on how tooth decay happens.*

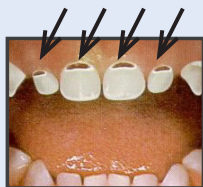
### Early Tooth Decay



White lines on the teeth near the gums could be the start of tooth decay.

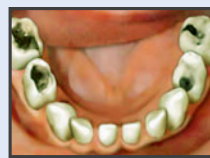
*See the back of this page for information on how to prevent tooth decay.*

### Tooth Decay



Tooth decay appears as yellow, brown or black areas.

*Children may not be able to say they have tooth pain.*



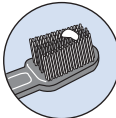

*Some baby teeth do not fall out until about age 12 years. Tooth decay can spread from baby teeth to adult teeth.*

**Children are not healthy when they have tooth decay.**

**If you think your child has any stage of tooth decay, visit a dental professional immediately.**

To find a dentist go to: [www.bcdental.org](http://www.bcdental.org)

# There are 4 things needed for Tooth Decay: teeth, bacteria (germs), sugar (from food and drinks), and time

How Does Tooth Decay Happen?	How Do You Prevent Tooth Decay?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Babies are not born with the bacteria that cause tooth decay. The bacteria can be spread from person to person.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everyone in the family needs regular daily mouth care and dental checkups to prevent the spread of the bacteria to baby.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the teeth are not brushed regularly, the bacteria is left on the teeth too long.</li> <li>The bacteria use sugars and starches (from food and drinks) to make a mild acid that damages teeth. Over time this damage can become a cavity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As soon as teeth come in, brush all tooth surfaces twice a day with a soft toothbrush.</li> <li>Brush with a rice grain sized amount of fluoride toothpaste to keep tooth enamel strong and help reverse early tooth decay.</li> </ul> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">   </div> <p>For a video on how to brush, see <a href="http://www.vch.ca/dental-health-children">www.vch.ca/dental-health-children</a>, 'Tooth Brushing for children three and under - The knee-to-knee technique'.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After teeth come into the mouth, regular use of a bottle containing anything other than water at bedtime/during the night may cause tooth decay.</li> <li>Sipping drinks other than water and eating snacks all day long may cause tooth decay.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Start to serve drinks from an open cup by 6 months. After 12 months offer all drinks from a cup.</li> <li>Have planned meal and snack times.</li> <li>Limit sticky, sugary foods and sweet drinks.</li> <li>Give water when your child is thirsty between meals and snacks.</li> </ul> <p>See VCH Bye Bye Baby Bottle for tips on how to stop the bottle habit after 12 months <a href="http://vch.eduhealth.ca">http://vch.eduhealth.ca</a>.</p>

**For more information go to [www.vch.ca](http://www.vch.ca).  
Under 'Your Health' click 'Infants. Scroll down and click 'Dental Health'.**

### Take your baby to see the dentist by their first birthday.

The dentist will check your child's teeth, provide support with brushing and apply fluoride varnish to the teeth. Take good care of your own teeth too!



### Do you know about Government dental insurance for children?

Children in families who get income assistance or MSP Premium Assistance are eligible for basic dental care through the BC Healthy Kids Program. For more info call 1-866-866-0800 or visit: [www.sdsi.gov.bc.ca/publicat/bcea/HealthyKids.htm](http://www.sdsi.gov.bc.ca/publicat/bcea/HealthyKids.htm).

Other fact sheets on parenting your child are available at your local Community Health Office/Centre or online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca>

For more information:

- HealthLink BC - Dial 8-1-1. Translation services are available in 130 languages. [www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca)
- or the Public Health Dental Program or a Public Health Nurse at Vancouver Coastal Health. [www.vch.ca](http://www.vch.ca)
- VCH Parenting Website - <http://parenting.vch.ca/>

For more copies, go online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca> or email [pem@vch.ca](mailto:pem@vch.ca) and quote Catalogue No. **FJ.100.5.E27**  
© Vancouver Coastal Health, September 2016

The information in this document is intended solely for the person to whom it was given by the health care team.  
[www.vch.ca](http://www.vch.ca)