

Preventing Infant Tooth Decay

All children are at risk of tooth decay. However the good news is that it is largely preventable. As the [enamel](#) (the protective layer on teeth) is thinner and softer on baby teeth it puts them at greater risk of decay. Bacteria in the mouth feed on sugars from foods and drinks. These bacteria then produce acid which can damage the enamel.

The first step is to use a warm damp cloth after feed time to gently massage your child's gums and to remove any sources of food and extended exposure to sugars. This is a great way of introducing your baby to mouth cleaning. It is easy to do and prepares your baby for toothbrushing, once the baby teeth decide to erupt. Ensuring feeding times are kept to when your child is hungry reduces the time sugar is able to sit on your child's teeth. Things like teddies, reading a book or singing a lullaby are great tools to settle your child while you are cleaning. These are also great habits and bonding opportunities for both you and your baby.

If you are bottle feeding - breastmilk, formula, water or milk are the way to go. Juice, cordial and soft drinks are not acceptable, as they are very high in sugar and will greatly increase the risk of tooth decay.

Once the child is six months of age it is recommended to try and introduce your child to a 'sippy' cup, although we understand that this may not always be achievable. If this is not possible we recommend giving water only at bed time. Feeding at bedtime with breast milk or formula can mean that baby's teeth are exposed to sugars overnight which can increase the risk of tooth decay.

It is also advisable that your child goes bottle free by 12 months of age. If your child is struggling to sleep without the bottle or the breast, you are not alone. Seeking the help of a sleep practitioner may be helpful to offer assistance when your child isn't sleeping.

Don't forget dental tooth decay is a preventable disease. We suggest bringing your child to visit the dentist by 12 months of age, as this will help to encourage a positive relationship between dentist and your child.

For further information regarding infant tooth decay, please don't hesitate to contact the friendly team at Eumundi Dental on [07 5442 7556](tel:0754427556).

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	01/12/2023	Date of Issue:	01/12/2022	
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