



Did you know that there are five important building blocks for healthy teeth for your baby?



Building Block 1:

If you're pregnant, take care of your mouth. Your child's future oral health begins with you.

- Taking care of your mouth while pregnant is important for you and your baby's health. Dental care – including x-rays and local anesthesia– is completely safe and recommended throughout pregnancy.
- Cavity-causing bacteria can be transmitted from your mouth to your baby's mouth and increase the chances your baby may get cavities. Avoid saliva-sharing behaviors with your baby, such as sharing eating utensils and cups, and cleaning a dropped pacifier by putting it in your mouth.



Building Block 2:

From birth, clean your baby's gums with a soft cloth after each feeding, or at least twice a day.

- To remove bacteria and bits of food, use a moist gauze pad or washcloth to clean your baby's gums.
- Teething babies might have tender gums. Teething rings can help, but avoid teething rings that are filled with liquid or have plastic objects that could break.
- Gently rubbing your baby's gums with a clean finger can also be soothing.



Building Block 3:

As soon as the first baby tooth comes in, use a soft toothbrush with just a dab of fluoride toothpaste twice a day.

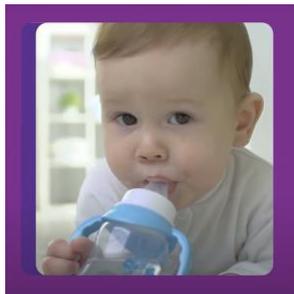
- Use a small smear of fluoridated toothpaste, about the size of a grain of rice, and an infant toothbrush.
- If the sides of baby teeth are touching, use dental floss to gently clean those areas.



Building Block 4:

Babies should visit the dentist by their first birthday.

- The first dental visit should be by your baby's first birthday, or within 6 months of the first tooth coming in.
- A baby's mouth also should be checked by a doctor during well-child visits.
- Fluoride varnish can be applied during your baby's dentist appointment, and during well-child visits to strengthen the teeth.



Building Block 5:

Avoid foods and drinks with added sugar until your baby is 24 months old. After 24 months, these types of foods and drinks should only be given to your child once in a while.

- Breast milk is the healthiest food for babies' teeth. Babies should get most of their nutrition from breast milk or formula during their first year of life.
- Never put your baby to sleep with a bottle filled with breast milk, formula, or drinks with added sugar such as juice, soda, flavored water, and flavored milk.
- Avoid letting your baby "graze" on foods or frequently sip drinks (besides water) between meals and snack-times. Constantly coating the teeth with sugar-sweetened beverages and eating snacks such as crackers, chips, and cookies throughout the day increases your baby's risk for developing cavities. Never let your baby drink sugary beverages in a sippy cup throughout the day.

Help your baby build habits for a lifetime of healthy teeth!