



When should my baby have their first dental visit?

- Babies can start to have dental health problems when they are very young. So you should schedule your baby's first visit to the dentist within 6 months after you see their first tooth. Their first visit shouldn't be any later than their first birthday.
- At this visit, the dentist will examine your baby's mouth, teeth and gums. They will ask about thumb sucking, and about how much sugar your child eats and drinks. They may suggest fluoride and a schedule of regular dental visits.
- Starting your child's regular dental visits at this age helps to establish a positive relationship with your dentist.

How should I clean my baby's mouth before they have teeth?

It is important to start cleaning your baby's mouth as soon as they are born. You should clean their gums with a gauze pad or washcloth after each feeding.



When should I start brushing and flossing my child's teeth?

- Start brushing as soon as their first tooth appears. This is usually when a baby is 6 months–1 year old.
- Brush gently with a soft-bristled toothbrush and a small amount of water. Ask your child's dentist about using fluoridated toothpaste.
- Start flossing as soon as any 2 teeth touch. Help your child until they can brush and floss on their own. This is usually when they're age 6 or 7.

What is baby bottle tooth decay?

Baby bottle tooth decay happens when the teeth are over exposed to sugary liquids like breast milk, formula, fruit juice and milk.

It can harm your child's teeth to give your baby a bottle with sugary liquids too often. Instead, give your baby a bottle of water in between regular feedings if they are old enough.

When will my baby start teething?

Teething normally happens when a child is between 4 months and 2-and-a-half years old. It causes sore and tender gums. Signs are irritability, loss of appetite, a lot of drooling and waking up more at night.

Gently rub their gums with a clean finger, a small soft-bristled toothbrush or wet gauze. Chewing on a clean, cold teething ring may also be helpful. If your baby is still uncomfortable after you try this, call your dentist or physician.

Should my child stop thumb sucking and using a pacifier?

Thumb sucking and using a pacifier are normal and soothing. Most children stop sucking their thumb and using pacifiers when they are 2–4 years old.

It normally does not harm their teeth or jaws. But some children who suck on a finger or pacifier for longer push their upper front teeth forward. Or it can cause their front teeth to come in the wrong way.

Use positive feedback, like praise or small rewards, to encourage your child to stop. Negative reinforcement or nagging can have the opposite effect.

Contact us

For more information, visit
bostonchildrens.org/dentistry

To make an appointment, call
(617) 355-6571.