

# Bright Little Smiles

## How to prevent baby bottle tooth decay



Even before his or her first steps, your baby can suffer from **baby bottle tooth decay**, a common problem caused by putting your child to sleep with milk, formula or juice. The sugars in these liquids encourage the growth of plaque-causing bacteria. Children who have had baby bottle tooth decay are at higher risk of problems down the road, such as crooked or decayed adult teeth, poor eating habits and speech problems.

### Stop decay with these steps

- **Wipe your baby's gums.** Use a clean piece of gauze or a washcloth after each feeding.
- **Clean your baby's teeth early.** It's best to start as soon as the first tooth begins to appear
- **Wean your toddler off the bottle.** Children should drink all liquids from a cup by their first birthday.
- **Don't put your child to bed with a bottle.** The only liquid your child should drink before bed is plain water.
- **Visit a dentist.** Your baby's first dentist visit should be between 6 and 12 months.

A lifetime of healthy teeth starts early. Learn how to keep bedtime cavity-free.



## Establish a bottle-less bedtime

Try these tips to help your child go to sleep without a bottle:

- Sing or play quiet music.
- Read a story aloud.
- Give your baby a soft blanket or teddy bear.
- Gently rock your baby or pat his or her back.

## Know the culprits

- Bottles containing milk, formula, fruit juice or soda
- Pacifiers dipped in honey, milk, juice, sugar water or anything sweet
- Prolonged feeding, even breastfeeding

### Make healthy smiles fun

*Grin! for Kids* is a free kid-friendly resource from Delta Dental. With wacky tooth trivia, jokes and craft projects you can do together, this printable activity book offers a lively approach to learning about dental health for children K-5.

Visit [deltadentalins.com/grin](http://deltadentalins.com/grin) to download the latest issue.

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