



## Raising Cavity Free Kids- Your Baby's First Year

**A** healthy mouth is an important part of your baby's health and development. You can start habits now that will keep your child from getting cavities as those first teeth come in.

### **Avoid spreading cavity-causing germs**

Babies are not born with the germs that cause cavities. They get them just like they do germs from a cold. After your baby is born, avoid sharing saliva.

- Do not taste your baby's food with the same spoon your baby is using
- Do not clean your baby's pacifier with your mouth
- Reduce the germs in your mouth by keeping your teeth healthy

### **Clean your baby's mouth and teeth daily**

Begin cleaning your baby's mouth on day one. This helps both you and your baby get used to the routine, making toothbrushing much easier as your child gets older.

- Place your child on a flat surface, your lap, or over your arm so that you can easily see all parts of the mouth
- Using a clean, wet baby washcloth or a soft gauze pad, gently wipe gums and tongue
- Look inside for any unusual signs like lumps or color changes. Contact dentist if changes are identified.
- When the first tooth erupts (usually between six and twelve months), switch to a small toothbrush and a tiny smear of fluoride toothpaste

## Feeding Habits

How, when, and what you feed your baby will determine if their teeth stay healthy.

- Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle. Lay your baby down right before he/she falls asleep and gently rub their back. If unsuccessful, try rocking, cuddling, or singing
- Start changing from a bottle to a cup when your baby can sit (about six months)
- Offer only water in a sippy cup
- Wait until baby is one year old to start juice

## Oral Habits

Sucking is a natural reflex that begins before the baby is born. There are several benefits to short term sucking. Here are things to consider:

- Sucking on a pacifier is better for baby than a thumb
- Let your baby decide whether to use the pacifier, do not insist
- Best times for a pacifier are naptime and bedtime
- For safety, do not dip pacifier in sweet foods, let babies share pacifiers, or tie pacifier around baby's neck, wrist, or crib

## Take your child to see a dentist

Experts suggest that children should see a dentist by age one.

- If your dentist does not see young children, ask your baby's doctor, childcare provider, or local health department for recommendations
- Before the first visit, write down questions you have about your baby's teeth and mouth
- The first visit might include looking at teeth and gums, painting fluoride on teeth, and discussing ways to keep your child's teeth healthy
- Safety net dental clinics provide care to all ages, regardless of whether the family has dental insurance or not. They accept payment from Medicaid (KanCare), private insurance, and private pay. Use this map to see if you have a safety net dental clinic in your area: <http://bit.ly/KSdentalclinics>



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