



**Start  
Early,**

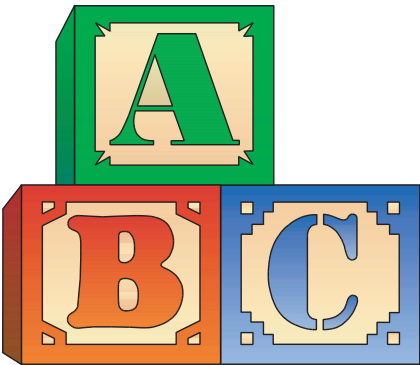


**Stay  
Healthy**

Early Dental Care  
Advice for Parents

This booklet was produced to provide oral health education to parents and caregivers of young children. Life long dental health starts with good dental care in childhood.

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**A**lways hold your baby while feeding. Avoid putting your child to bed with a bottle.

**B**egin cleaning your child's teeth as soon as they appear. A clean cloth or gauze square works well until they have 4 - 6 teeth. A soft baby toothbrush can be used without toothpaste as more teeth appear.

**C**omfort your child with hugs, songs, stories and/or toys instead of a bottle whenever possible.

## **START GOOD DENTAL HABITS EARLY**

- As soon as your child's teeth appear, brush them at least twice a day, especially before bedtime. Use a small soft bristle toothbrush with water only.
- By 3 years of age, you can use a tiny amount of toothpaste (the size of a pea) to brush your child's teeth. Teach your child to spit out the toothpaste. You may also begin to floss your child's teeth.
- Wean your child off the bottle by 18 months to 2 years of age.
- Do not allow your child to sip on sweetened drinks (juices) all day long.
- Help your child to brush his/her teeth until he/she is between 7 and 9 years of age.
- Change your child's toothbrush every 3 months or after an infectious illness.
- If your child is on a liquid medicine (usually sweetened for taste), rinse and/or brush with water after the medicine has been given.

## **TEETHING SIGNS, DISCOMFORTS, AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT THEM**

Drooling, red/swollen gums and fussiness are some signs that your child may be teething. Below are some ideas to comfort him/her:

### **Drooling:**

- Put a cloth bib on your baby to protect his/her skin
- Apply petroleum-based ointment to help soothe the red irritated skin

### **Red and swollen gums:**

- Give your baby a cool damp washcloth (may be frozen), frozen teething ring or a firm rubber toy to chew on (check teething rings daily for cracks)
- Massage your baby's sore gums with your fingers
- Teething gels are not recommended for regular use

### **Fussiness:**

- Comfort your baby by cuddling or rocking him/her

Teething does not cause illness. Call your child's doctor if your baby has a temperature of 38.5°C (101°F) and higher (taken under the arm) and/or has diarrhea.



# TEETHING PATTERN

## FIRST TEETH

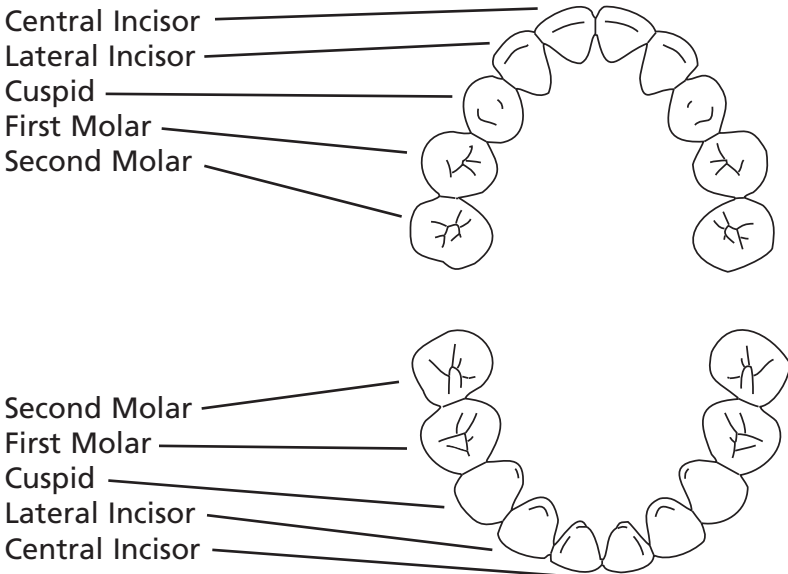
### UPPER JAW

	When to expect teeth (in months)	When to expect teeth to fall out (in years)
Central Incisors	7 - 12	6 - 7
Lateral Incisors	9 - 13	7 - 8
Cuspids	16 - 23	10 - 12
First Molars	13 - 19	9 - 11
Second Molars	25 - 33	10 - 12

### LOWER JAW

Second Molars	20 - 31	10 - 12
First Molars	12 - 18	9 - 11
Cuspids	16 - 23	9 - 12
Lateral Incisors	7 - 16	7 - 8
Central Incisors	6 - 10	6 - 7

This chart is a guideline only.  
Children grow at their own pace.



## EARLY CHILDHOOD TOOTH DECAY

Early childhood tooth decay (ECTD) is a severe form of tooth decay. It affects the upper front teeth and occasionally the upper molars.

### Possible causes of ECTD:

- Going to bed with a bottle of milk, formula, breast milk or juice. Breast milk, formula, cow's milk and fruit juice all contain sugars.
- Falling asleep at the breast with milk still in the mouth
- Using a training cup for a prolonged period of time
- Using a pacifier dipped in honey, sugar or other sweetener

### Checking for ECTD:

Once a child has teeth, lift his/her upper lip once a month to check the teeth. Look for dull white spots or lines on the teeth close to the gums. Dark spots on teeth are also a sign. If you see any signs, take your child to a dentist as soon as possible. ECTD should be treated early or your child may develop infection and have pain.



Whitish lines along the gumline could mean the beginning of decay.



Brown areas or decayed areas along the gumline.

## **USE OF PACIFIERS**

Your baby's natural need to suck has 2 purposes: nourishment and comfort. Your child may suck his/her thumb, finger or a pacifier. You can limit sucking on a pacifier more easily than thumb or finger sucking.

Sucking after the permanent teeth have started to erupt may cause problems in your child's tooth development.

Below are some suggestions for the use of a pacifier:

- Choose a pacifier to aid in proper dental development
- Keep the clip-on ribbon short (should not be long enough to wrap around baby's neck)
- Wash the pacifier before the first use
- Check the condition of the pacifier often - if it becomes cracked, torn or sticky, replace it
- Do not dip in honey, sugar or any other sweetener
- Do not moisten or clean the pacifier in your own mouth as germs may be transferred to the child

# FLUORIDE

Fluoride plays an important role in the prevention of dental decay. Below are some sources of fluoride:

## Fluoride Toothpaste

- Children under the age of 3 years should not use toothpaste that contains fluoride.
- After the age of 3, begin using toothpaste. Put a “pea-sized” amount of toothpaste on your child’s toothbrush.
- Ensure that your child spits out the toothpaste.

## Fluoride Supplements

- Give your child fluoride supplements only if it is recommended by your dentist

## Topical Fluoride Treatment

- A concentrated form of fluoride that is applied at a dental office. The dentist or dental hygienist will indicate if there is a need for a topical fluoride treatment.

## Fluoridated Water

- Water fluoridation has been shown to be an effective way of reducing dental decay. For information on your community’s water supply, contact the Thunder Bay District Health Unit.



## HEALTHY SNACKING

Snacks are important for young children, but even nutritious snacks eaten too often throughout the day can lead to tooth decay. Your child should snack when he/she is hungry or thirsty, not for comfort or entertainment.

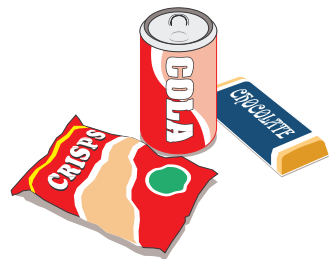
### 3 Steps to Healthy Snacking:

1. Limit the number of snacks to 2 - 3 per day.
2. Offer a variety of snacks.
3. Offer nutritious snacks, such as those listed below:
  - 100% fruit juice (may be diluted with water)
  - fruits and vegetables
  - milk - plain or chocolate
  - yogurt
  - cereal (not sugar coated)
  - cheese
  - peanut butter
  - eggs
  - whole grain bread and muffins



The ideal time for a sweet snack is when your child can brush afterwards. The following snacks are not to be eaten often:

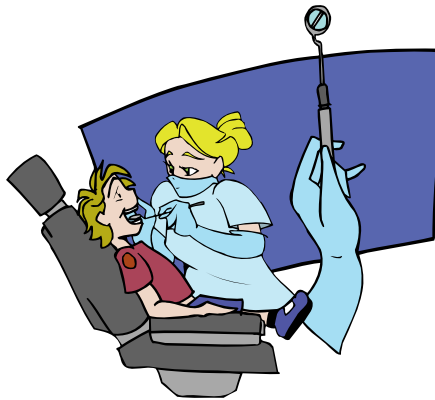
- candies
- chips and cheesies
- cookies and cakes
- marshmallows
- fruit rollups and fruit leathers
- dried fruits (e.g., raisins)
- pop (regular and diet)
- sugar-coated cereals
- honey, syrups and jams/jellies
- fruit flavoured drinks (usually contain a high amount of sugar)



## FIRST DENTAL VISIT

For children today, a visit to the dental office is often a fun experience. A positive attitude on the part of the parent is important in determining the child's outlook on visiting the dentist.

- Bring your child to the dentist before there is a problem. During your regular daily cleaning of your child's teeth, if you see something that you think might be a problem, call your dentist.
- Otherwise, bring your child to the dentist at 2-3 years of age, or when all 20 primary teeth have erupted. The first visit should be a casual, friendly, get-acquainted visit.
- Find a dentist who enjoys and regularly treats children. If your family dentist does not enjoy working with children, ask him to recommend one who does.
- Don't over-prepare your child for their first dental visit.
- To avoid making your child anxious, don't use words like "hurt", "afraid" or "bad". Try not to relay any fears you may have about the dentist to your child.



## **MANAGING DENTAL PAIN OR TRAUMA**

Injuries to the teeth or untreated toothaches may affect your child's tooth or mouth development. If your child has a toothache or injures his/her teeth, bring him/her to the dentist as soon as possible. Below are suggestions until you get to the dentist:

### **Toothache:**

- Place a cold compress on the cheek over the swollen area

### **Broken tooth:**

- Gently clean any dirt or debris from the injured area with lukewarm water
- Apply cold compress or ice to the face over the injured area to keep the swelling down

### **Knocked-out tooth:**

- A baby tooth should not be replanted back into the gum (treat injury as above)
- A permanent tooth can be replanted if you move quickly:
  - Do not touch the root of the tooth
  - Place tooth in container of milk (or water if milk is not available)
  - Take the tooth with you to the dentist within 30 minutes of it being knocked out.

## **CHILDREN IN NEED OF TREATMENT (CINOT) PROGRAM**

The Children in Need of Treatment (CINOT) program is a partnership between the Ministry of Health, local municipalities and your local dentists. CINOT provides dental treatment to children in need of urgent care who come from families who do not have dental insurance and cannot afford the cost of the necessary dental treatment.

### **Who can use CINOT?**

All children up to their 18th birthday are eligible for this program if:

- they have a visible cavity or an urgent dental condition
- the parents/guardians do not have dental insurance
- the parents/guardians cannot afford to pay for the necessary dental treatment.

### **How does CINOT work?**

During the school year, children in certain grades will have their teeth checked by the dental hygienist from the Health Unit. If a child is found to have a visual dental condition, such as decay, pain or a situation that is likely to cause pain in the future, the parent/guardian will be contacted.

For children not screened at school, screening by a dental hygienist is available at the Health Unit. If you are interested in this service, call the Health Unit for an appointment.

If your child is eligible for the program, you will be sent a form asking you to declare that there is no dental insurance and you cannot afford the cost of treatment.

Once this form is returned, you will be sent a dental claim form to bring to the dentist at the time of your child's appointment.

The dentist will then directly bill the Health Unit for treatments which are covered by CINOT.



Thunder Bay District  
**Health Unit**

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