BRIGHT LITTLE SMILES

Help your baby’s smile sparkle by preventing baby bottle tooth decay. It’s caused when babies are put to bed with a bottle containing a sweet liquid. Sugars present in the sweet liquid pool around teeth and gums and feed decay-causing bacteria. Continued exposure to these sugars can lead to long-term issues that last into adulthood.

YOUR BABY’S FIRST DENTIST VISIT SHOULD BE BETWEEN 6 AND 12 MONTHS.
HEALTHY TEETH START EARLY
Prevent baby bottle tooth decay with these tips.

› Wipe your baby’s gums. Use a clean piece of gauze or 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 the time they are about 12 months of age.
› Don’t put your child to bed with a bottle. Try a pacifier instead. Avoid dipping your child’s pacifier in anything sweet. Adding milk, juice, sugar water or any other sweet liquid can cause major problems.
› Visit a dentist. Your baby’s first dentist visit should be between 6 and 12 months.

KNOW THE CULPRITS
› Bottles containing milk, formula, fruit juice or soda
› Pacifiers dipped in honey or anything sweet
› Even breast-fed infants can have similar issues if they have prolonged feeding habits.

DAMAGING EFFECTS
› Increased decay on the upper front teeth
› Missing teeth (due to extraction)
› Crooked or damaged adult teeth
› Poor eating habits
› Speech problems

MAKING CHANGES
Talk to your pediatrician to determine exactly what kind of changes are best to wean your baby off the bottle. You can discuss:

› Gradually diluting bottles with water over two or three weeks
› Only providing water in your child’s bottle during bedtime
› Substituting a dentist-recommended pacifier instead of a bottle at bedtime

BOTTLE-LESS BEDTIME
Try these tips for getting to bed without a bottle.

› Sing or play quiet music.
› Share a story aloud.
› Use a soft blanket or teddy bear.
› Put the baby to bed awake to help him or her settle down alone.
› Gently rock your baby or pat his or her back.

MAKE HEALTHY SMILES FUN
Grin! for Kids is a new, free kid-friendly resource from Delta Dental. With wacky tooth trivia, jokes and craft projects you can do together – this special issue of our oral health e-magazine offers a lively approach to learning about oral health.

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