

# They're Not Just Baby Teeth



People say “oh, they’re just baby teeth”, but baby teeth are important, especially for eating, talking and smiling. Healthy baby teeth will pave the way for healthy adult teeth. By helping children to take good care of their teeth, you are starting habits that will last them all their lives.

Babies are not born with a sweet tooth and will enjoy home-made baby foods without sugar. If you’re buying baby foods, look out for the ones without sugar.

## TOOTH TIPS FOR 0-2 YEARS

*When a baby is born, the first set of teeth is already there, under the gums.*

- Use a clean damp cloth to clean baby’s gums after a feed
- Use a soft toothbrush and water when first tooth appears
- Don’t use toothpaste unless advised by your dentist
- Breastfeed or give breastmilk, formula or cooled boiled tap water in baby’s bottle
- Don’t let baby sleep with a bottle in its mouth
- Don’t put sweet drinks, juice, tea or fruit drinks in baby’s bottle
- Encourage drinking from a free flowing sippy cup from 6 months
- Don’t dip a soother in honey, jam or anything sweet (only use an orthodontic soother, wean the baby off it as soon as possible, as it can affect the way a baby’s teeth grow).

Be aware that the bacteria that cause tooth decay can be transferred from a parent/carer to an infant through sharing of spoons and cups, or licking soothers.

## TEETHING

Symptoms may include disturbed sleep, feeding irritability and swollen tender gums. The most common side effect is drooling or dribbling. Try giving baby something to chew on, such as a cooled teething rings. Milk or cooled boiled water may also help. If necessary ask your doctor or public health nurse to recommend a mild pain reliever—sugar-free. Avoid ointments which numb the gum unless your dentist recommends them.

Remember that pregnancy is a unique time during your life so be aware of the importance of good oral hygiene habits and healthy eating. This can have a positive impact on your own oral health and general health and also of that of your baby and family.

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