

Nursing Bottle Mouth (Early Childhood Caries)



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NURSING BOTTLE MOUTH

If you give your baby a bottle of anything but water at nap or bedtime, you could be risking your child's dental health and appearance.

Many babies who fall asleep with a baby bottle develop a condition of severe tooth decay known as **NURSING BOTTLE MOUTH**. Usually the front four upper teeth are most affected.



WHAT CAUSES NURSING BOTTLE MOUTH?

The sugars found in sweetened liquids such as fruit juice, soda pop, even milk and formula can cause tooth decay in babies as soon as teeth appear.

When a baby falls asleep with a bottle, the liquid forms a pool around the sleeping child's teeth. This pool of milk or sugared liquid causes acids to form in the mouth that will decay the teeth over a period of time.

That's why parents should be very careful of the types of liquids they place in nursing bottles.

BE CAREFUL USING THE BOTTLE AS A PACIFIER

Nursing bottle mouth can also develop in a child if you are in the habit of giving your baby a bottle every time the child gets fussy. Prolonged, continuous bottle feeding with milk, fruit juices, formula, or other sweetened liquids can cause great damage to your child's teeth. If you have to use the bottle as a pacifier, fill it with water.

PREVENTING NURSING BOTTLE MOUTH

You can protect your child's primary teeth from early decay by following these simple guidelines:

- ❏ wipe baby's teeth and gums with a damp washcloth or gauze after each feeding until most of the teeth have emerged. This will remove plaque and protect the teeth until you can start brushing and flossing the child's teeth.
- ❏ never give your child a pacifier dipped in a sweetened liquid.
- ❏ don't let your child fall asleep with a bottle of anything but water. This will eliminate the risk of decay from sugared liquids.
- ❏ start regular dental visits before your child's first birthday.

PROTECT YOUR CHILD'S PRIMARY (BABY) TEETH

When a child loses a primary tooth prematurely due to accident, decay, or disease the remaining teeth can drift into its space in the jaw. The permanent tooth then cannot assume its proper position when it emerges.

As a result, the child can develop a mouthful of crooked or crowded teeth. There may be difficulty chewing or speaking clearly. The child's smile and appearance may also be affected.

It may take years of expensive dental work to repair the damage caused by early tooth decay.

