



Keep your baby smiling...

# Prevent early childhood cavities

### Ways to comfort your baby at bedtime:

Your child may cry or fight giving up the bedtime bottle. The following can help:

- ♥ Give a clean pacifier.
- ♥ Give a back rub.
- ♥ Hold or rock your child.
- ♥ Read to your baby.
- ♥ Sing or play music.
- ♥ Give a favorite blanket or toy.
- ♥ Use a musical toy.

These can also help make weaning easier when you and your baby are ready.

**Remember, you are making these changes out of love.**



What one thing will you do to make sure your child's teeth are healthy?

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## Does your child:

- Go to bed with a bottle filled with milk, formula, or a sweetened drink?
- Sleep all night at the breast?
- Drink from a bottle throughout the day?
- Use a pacifier dipped in sugar or honey?

If your child does one or more of the above, he or she could get early childhood cavities.



Early childhood cavities happen when liquids that contain sugar are left in a baby's mouth for a long time. Even breast milk and formula contain sugar.

Baby teeth are important. When they are decayed, a child may have pain, eating and speech problems, and a poor self-image. If baby teeth are lost too early, the permanent teeth may come in crowded or out of line.

## Start early to protect your child's teeth

1. Put your baby to bed without a bottle.\*
2. After your baby's first tooth appears, don't let him or her sleep all night at the breast. Instead, place your baby on his or her back after nursing.
3. Begin teaching your baby to drink from a cup around 6 months of age. Offer water, breastmilk or formula. Juice is not recommended during a baby's first year.
4. Avoid soda pop and other sweet drinks.
5. Don't let your child drink from a bottle all day long.
6. Wean your baby from the bottle by 1 year of age.
7. Clean your baby's teeth and gums with a clean washcloth or a small, soft toothbrush at bedtime.
8. Check with your doctor or dentist to make sure your child is getting enough fluoride each day. Fluoride protects teeth from decay.



\* If your baby must have a bottle to sleep, fill it with plain water. You may need to gradually dilute the bottle contents until only water is offered.

**You can prevent early childhood cavities and keep your baby smiling!**