Your Baby: Bottle Feeding and Tooth Decay

Teeth are important for chewing, speaking and appearance. The first baby teeth fall out around age 6, while some 12 year olds are still losing their baby teeth.

Tooth decay is serious at any age and can lead to pain, infection and extensive dental treatment. Permanent teeth may also be damaged as they develop, if baby teeth have severe decay.

What causes tooth decay in babies?

Bacteria that live in baby’s mouth use the sugar from milk, juice, formula or any sweetened liquid your baby drinks. Tooth decay can begin when teeth are not cleaned daily and when sweet liquids are in the mouth for a long time. This can happen when babies:

- fall asleep with a bottle or spill-proof cup in their mouth.
- carry a bottle or spill-proof cup and drink from it all day long.

Remember....

- Clean your baby’s gums and teeth daily. The last thing used in your child’s mouth before bed should be a toothbrush.
- Breastfeeding is the best way to feed your baby.
- Always hold your baby while feeding. Never prop the baby bottle or leave the baby alone.
- Never put your baby to bed with a bottle. Feeding should be done when baby is awake.
- Encourage baby to start using a regular cup, usually between 6 to 9 months of age.
- When baby begins to crawl and walk, make sure he is sitting while drinking from a cup or bottle.
- Avoid sweetened beverages such as pop, fruit drinks and sweetened tea.
- Keep your own mouth clean and healthy to prevent the spread of decay-causing germs to your baby.

Tips to help your baby fall asleep without a bottle or spill-proof cup:

- Hold your baby and rock in a rocking chair.
- Play soft music or sing quietly to your baby.
- Read a book or tell your child a quiet story to prepare for sleep.

For more information, contact the Oral Health Program at (306) 655-4462.