Instead of a baby bottle at bedtime, try relaxing your baby by:

- Rocking in a chair.
- Singing a soothing song.
- Rubbing your baby's back.
- Winding up a musical mobile.
- Giving a soft blanket or stuffed animal.

Washington State DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL & HEALTH SERVICES

Medical Assistance Administration

May 1998

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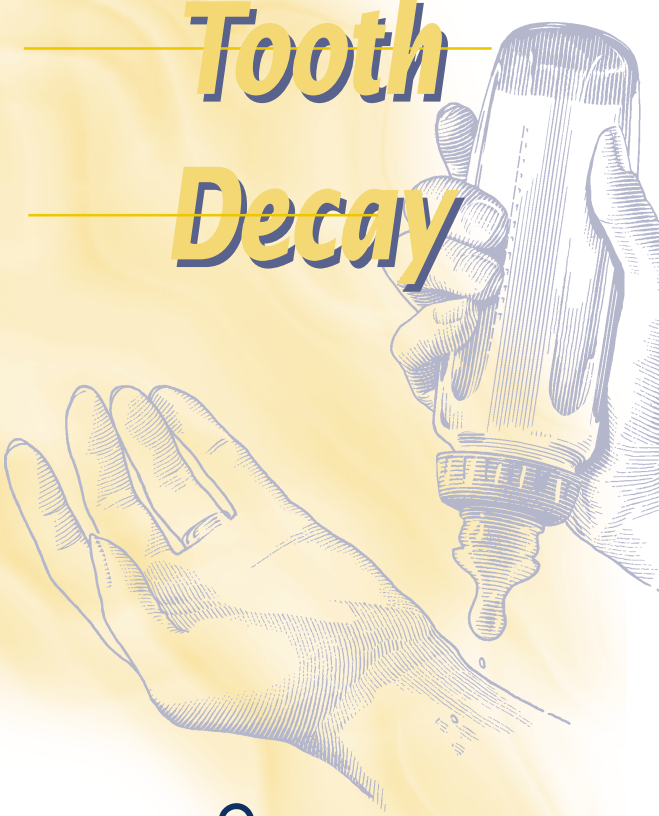
Baby Bottle Tooth Decay



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What is baby bottle tooth decay?

Baby bottle tooth decay is severe tooth decay that usually results in baby being hospitalized. A baby's teeth can be hurt if the baby is put to bed with a bottle filled with fruit juice, soda pop , milk formula, and sweet drinks such as Jello or sugar water.

Why does this happen?

During the day, the baby swallows these drinks quickly, so the liquid does not stay on the teeth. During naps and at bedtime, the sugary liquid pools around the teeth. With less saliva to rinse teeth during sleep, tooth decay begins.

What can you do to stop baby bottle tooth decay?

Here are some helpful hints:

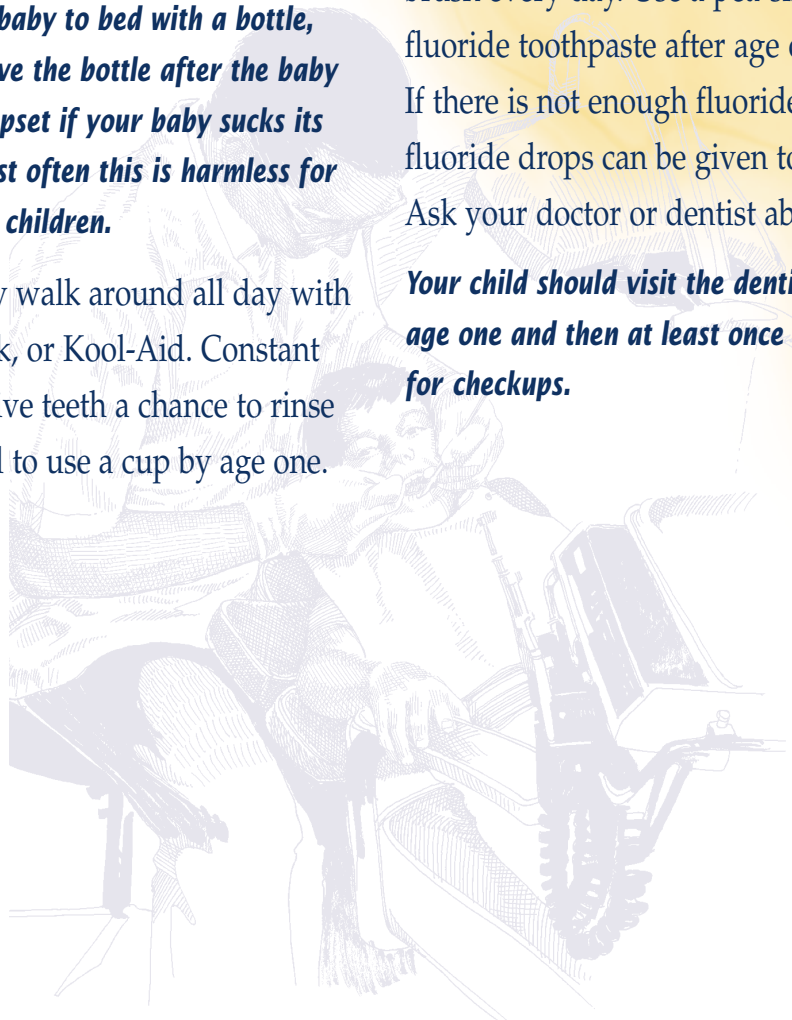
Feed your baby before putting him or her to bed. Replace the nap and bedtime bottle with a pacifier.

If you must put your baby to bed with a bottle, use only water. Remove the bottle after the baby is asleep. Do not be upset if your baby sucks its thumb or fingers. Most often this is harmless for babies or very young children.

Do not let your baby walk around all day with a bottle of juice, milk, or Kool-Aid. Constant drinking does not give teeth a chance to rinse off. Teach your child to use a cup by age one.

Putting your baby to bed with a baby bottle can hurt your baby's teeth!

Clean your baby's teeth. Simply wipe the teeth and gums with a clean, damp wash cloth or gauze pad.

As teeth appear, brush them gently with a soft brush every day. Use a pea-sized drop of fluoride toothpaste after age one.
If there is not enough fluoride in your water, fluoride drops can be given to your child daily. Ask your doctor or dentist about fluoride.

Your child should visit the dentist around age one and then at least once each year for checkups.