How to take care of your baby's teeth and gums.

Healthy gums and teeth help your child speak, eat, and smile. Baby teeth hold the space for permanent adult teeth to grow in the right way. If a baby tooth comes out too early, the bite can change, leading to more problems later in life.

Children who get cavities before 6 years old are more likely to get cavities later in life. This is why it is so important to take care of your baby's teeth.

Before your baby has teeth

Wipe your baby's gums with a soft, clean cloth after each feeding to protect their smile. This includes when they breastfeed, drink from a bottle, or eat.

When your baby gets their first tooth

When your baby gets their first tooth, start to use a small soft toothbrush to clean their tooth (or teeth) and gums. Do this 2 times a day using a very small amount of toothpaste. Place the toothbrush at an angle toward the gums and gently brush in circular motions.

If your baby needs a bottle to sleep, only fill it with water. Sleeping with a bottle of sugary liquids like milk, formula, or fruit juice makes it much more likely that your child will get cavities or ear infections.

Make sure your baby has a dental check-up before their 1st birthday, and then every 6 months after that.

Your child may need fluoride varnishes or supplements as they get older. Talk to a dentist, doctor, or pharmacist about the right fluoride care for your child.

- Children age 6 months and older should have a fluoride varnish applied to their teeth 2 to 4 times a year.
- Children age 6 months to 16 years who live in areas where there isn't enough fluoride in the water should take fluoride supplements.