

THE ORAL HEALTH EXPERT

In honor of Baby Safety Month, we'll discuss ways to improve your baby's oral health and show you how to relieve teething pain.

DELTA DENTAL OF ARIZONA

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4 Tricks to Perk up Picky Palates



Many young children go through a stage where they become extremely choosy about what they eat. Though it's a normal phase, parents of picky eaters may be concerned about whether their kids are getting enough nutrients. If your child refuses to eat anything green or seems to be eating nothing but mac and cheese, never fear - try these tricks to broaden his or her mealtime horizons.

1. **Don't let kids drink juice or other sugary drinks throughout the day.** By filling up on non-nutritive liquids, they won't have room for the balanced dinner you planned.¹ Instead, make sure your child drinks plenty of water throughout the day.
2. **Make mealtime fun!** Serve brightly colored foods and use cookie cutters to create awesome, kid-friendly shapes.¹ After all, eating is more fun when your veggies are shaped like hearts, stars and flowers.
3. **Let your child get involved in the decision-making process.** Ask for help picking out healthy foods from the grocery store and encourage your child to assist with dinner preparation. Kids can rinse veggies and mix ingredients.¹
4. **Don't offer dessert as a reward.** That implies that dessert is the best part of the meal,¹ which may just increase your picky child's desire for sweet treats. Instead, you can redefine dessert to mean fruit or yogurt - or skip dessert altogether.

AN ORAL HEALTH GUIDE FOR NEWBORNS AND NEW PARENTS



Studies suggest that breastfeeding can be beneficial to a newborn's oral and overall health. It's just as important for parents to keep an eye on their own oral health. Here are a few tips to help parents and babies enjoy healthy smiles.²

Breastfeeding may help with teeth alignment.

When possible, breastfeeding is the recommended choice for most babies' overall health, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. Not only does it provide all the nutrients infants require, but it also reduces several health risks for babies.

When it comes to oral health, studies have shown that babies who are breastfed for at least their first six months are less likely to develop teeth alignment issues such as open bites, crossbites and overbites than those who were breastfed for a shorter period or not at all.³ However, breastfeeding is not a guarantee that your child will not need braces someday, as other factors are also involved. Your dentist can check your child's bite to see if alignment issues are developing.

Breastfeeding can help decrease the risk of baby bottle tooth decay.³

Baby bottle tooth decay happens when babies' teeth are exposed to drinks that contain sugar. This kind of tooth decay can occur because a baby is put to bed with a bottle containing formula, milk or fruit juice.

While breast milk also contains sugar and breastfed babies can get cavities, breastfeeding may help reduce the risk of this kind of tooth decay.

Before teeth first appear, wipe the child's gums with a clean, moist cloth after each feeding.³ Once baby teeth appear, help stop cavities by brushing your baby's teeth with water.⁴

Taking care of parents' oral health.

Of course, most new parents are busy and often sleep deprived, whether the mother is breastfeeding or not. Exhaustion combined with a busy schedule can cause parents to neglect their own oral health. New parents should continue to brush twice a day, floss every day, stay hydrated and schedule regular dental checkups. By continuing to take good care of their oral health, parents can help ward off gum disease and cavities.

Not only is oral health important to parents, but if tooth decay or cavities are present, bacteria could be transferred to the baby's mouth simply by sharing a spoon. Parents should avoid sharing spoons, straws or other utensils with babies or using their mouths to clean pacifiers.⁵

SMILE STATS



When the actors in *Harry Potter* movies lost their baby teeth, they magically reappeared. Fake baby teeth were used to preserve continuity.⁶



Your smile may be at its best early on. Baby teeth often look whiter than permanent teeth due to calcification and thinner enamel.⁷



In China, September 20th is Love Your Teeth Day, which promotes preventive care and oral health awareness.⁸

Never Give These to a Teething Child



Teething — the process of baby teeth coming through the gums — begins with most babies about six months after birth.⁹ While teething pain caused by sore or tender gums can be relatively mild for some babies, others may experience discomfort.¹⁰

A number of products promise to relieve teething pain, but some are ineffective or even downright dangerous. Here are some products to avoid, along with tips for safer ways to relieve teething pain.

Teething necklaces and bracelets^{11,12}

Amber necklaces have grown in popularity in recent years due to claims that they help relieve teething pain. However, teething jewelry made from amber and other materials have caused death and serious injury to children due to strangulation and choking, in addition to mouth injuries and infections. As a result, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants not wear or use any jewelry. Also, there is no scientific research or evidence to support claims of effectiveness in reducing pain and inflammation.

Numbing gels¹³

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advises that you do not use products containing benzocaine for children younger than 2. The FDA warns of serious risks, including reduced oxygen through the blood stream, and says these gels provide “little to no benefits for treating oral pain.”

Teething tablets¹³

The FDA also warns parents not to use, and to dispose of, homeopathic teething tablets made from natural ingredients, due to the presence of toxic belladonna in some brands.

Safe ways to relieve teething pain^{11,13}

You can help soothe a teething child by:

- Massaging their gums gently with a clean finger, small cool spoon, moist gauze pad or frozen washcloth.
- Offering a clean, solid (not liquid), non-toxic teether to chew on.
- Making tasty frozen teething pops from healthy ingredients.

If your baby continues to show signs of discomfort or if you have questions about relieving teething symptoms, talk to your dentist or pediatrician.

MOUTH-HEALTHY RECIPE: KIWI-MELON TEETHING POPS

Ingredients:



1 kiwi, peeled and chopped



1 cup honeydew melon



1 tablespoon water

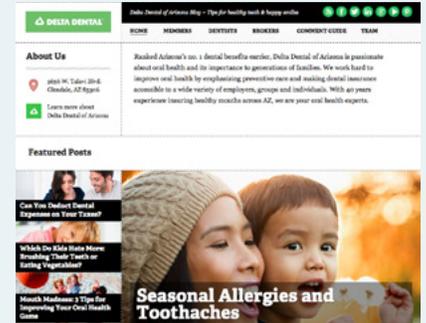
Directions:

1. Blend ingredients until smooth.
2. Pour into ice pop molds and insert tops.
3. Freeze for 2 to 3 hours.
4. Run the base of the molds under warm water for 30 seconds to remove pops.

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SOURCES

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- ¹³<https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/t/teething>