



# Building Blocks to a Healthy Start

Resources to Help Make Sure All Our Kids are "AOK"

## How can I Check and Clean My Baby's Mouth?

### NEWBORN

From Birth, wipe the baby's mouth and gums with a clean wet gauze pad or washcloth after each feeding and right before bedtime.



Do not prop a bottle when you put your baby to bed at night or at naptime. Do not let your baby take a bottle to bed. By age one, teach your child to drink from a cup instead of a bottle.

### BABY'S FIRST TOOTH

When teeth appear, brush them with a child's size toothbrush and plain water. Begin flossing when at least two teeth touch.



### BABY'S FIRST BIRTHDAY

Start dental visits by the child's first birthday. Make visits regularly. If you think your child has dental problems, take the child to the dentist as soon as possible.



### TODDLER TIMES

Brush teeth twice a day of children over age two with a child size toothbrush and pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Make sure to help them floss daily.

### BIG KIDS

Brush your child's teeth until age six or seven, children should be able to brush on their own after that, but often require supervision until about age 10 or 11. Children should also be supervised while brushing to keep them from swallowing the toothpaste.



For more information, please visit the Kane County Health Department's website at [www.kanehealth.com/aok.htm](http://www.kanehealth.com/aok.htm) or call 630-208-3801

# FACT SHEET

## What is Tooth Decay?

Tooth decay is when germs and bacteria form on your teeth. When you eat or drink foods containing sugars or starches, such as milk, formula, juices and sodas, the germs in the mouth use the sugar to make acids. Over time, these acids can make a cavity in the tooth and cause tooth decay.

## How can I Prevent Baby Bottle Tooth Decay?

Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle at night or at naptime. (*If you put your baby to bed with a bottle, fill it only with **water***). Milk, formula, juices, and other sweet drinks such as soda all have sugar in them.

If your baby uses a pacifier, do not dip it in anything sweet like sugar or honey. Near his first birthday, you should teach your child to drink from a cup instead of a bottle. Feed your baby fruits and vegetables; do not give him sweets or candies.

## How can I Help my Child Brush?

Until they are six or seven years old, continue to brush your children's teeth twice a day with a child's size toothbrush and a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Continue to assist with flossing as needed. By six or seven, children should be able to brush on their own, but often require supervision until about age 10 or 11. Since each child is different, your dentist can help you determine whether your child is brushing and flossing properly.

## How can I protect my baby's teeth?

**Fluoride** (said like *floor-eyed*) protects teeth from tooth decay and helps heal early decay. Fluoride is in the drinking water of some towns and cities. Ask your dentist or doctor if your water has fluoride in it. If it doesn't, talk to your dentist or doctor about giving you a prescription for fluoride drops for your baby.

## Take Your Child to the Dentist

Ask your dentist when to bring your child in for his first visit. Usually, the dentist will want to see a child by his first birthday. At this first visit, your dentist can quickly check your child's teeth.

Visit the dentist regularly for professional cleaning and oral exams. Ask the dentist about dental sealants, a protective plastic coating that can be applied to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth where decay often starts.

Adolescents may need reminders about practicing good oral hygiene, the importance of regular dental check ups and making nutritious food and beverage choices.

The Illinois Department of Public Health, Division of Oral Health provides a number of fact sheets including Dental Care during Pregnancy, Baby Bottle Tooth Decay, and Fluoride to Prevent Tooth Decay. These are available at <http://www.idph.state.il.us/HealthWellness/oralhlth/factsheets.htm> and The Center For Disease Control (CDC) offers dental information at <http://www.cdc.gov/OralHealth/factsheets/brushup.htm>

The information presented in this sheet was obtained partly from the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, [www.nidcr.nih.gov/](http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/) and the American Dental Association, [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org) January 2005.