



Breastfeeding After Your Baby Gets Teeth

Your baby's first tooth ([/English/ages-stages/baby/teething-tooth-care/Pages/Teething-4-to-7-Months.aspx](#)) probably will appear after 6 months, though some babies are born with one or more teeth. In other cases, teeth don't appear until the child is almost a year old.

Many nursing parents decide that it's time to stop breastfeeding when they first notice a tooth. Usually, this is because the baby has nipped the breast at the end of a feeding session. Or, the nursing parent fears they will be bitten soon. Yet many babies with teeth (*or those who are teething*) never bite when breastfeeding.



Did you know?

An actively nursing baby will not bite because their tongue covers their lower teeth. A baby who nips the breast as they start to pull away near the end of a feeding can be taught to stop. Try not to let this minor challenge get in the way of breastfeeding so early in your nursing relationship.

How to prevent a breastfeeding baby from biting

- **If your baby has sprouted a tooth and you are concerned that they may nip you as a feeding ends:** Keep your finger ready to break the suction and remove your breast as soon as her rhythmic suckling stops (and before she starts to drift off or feel playful).
- **If your baby has already bitten you while nursing:** Say no firmly and then remove your baby from your breast. Try to keep this action as bland and matter-of-fact as possible. Too much anger or even amusement may interest them enough to make them want to repeat the experiment again. Once they realize that biting means no more breast, they will learn to stifle the impulse. (*Meanwhile, don't forget to offer your baby a one-piece teething ring when they are not nursing.*)

How to prevent baby-bottle tooth decay

Once your baby's teeth have begun to come in, keep in mind that even breastfeeding babies are sometimes susceptible to baby-bottle tooth decay (BBTD) ([/English/ages-stages/baby/teething-tooth-care/Pages/How-to-Prevent-Tooth-Decay-in-Your-Baby.aspx](#)). BBTD is a major cause of dental cavities in infants that can also cause serious damage to permanent teeth later on.

Baby-bottle tooth decay results from teeth being coated in almost any liquid other than water for long periods. It occurs most commonly among babies who are put to bed with a bottle of formula or juice. Breastfeeding infants who fall asleep while nursing with unswallowed milk remaining in their mouths are also vulnerable to tooth decay.

Beyond the first year, dental caries—tooth decay—can occur in toddlers who receive sugary liquids in a bottle or who are nursing and eating foods with sugar and carbohydrates. **Make a point of removing your breast from your baby's mouth once they have fallen asleep.**

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Your pediatrician will check your baby's teeth as part of the well-child visits (</English/family-life/health-management/Pages/Well-Child-Care-A-Check-Up-for-Success.aspx>) during the first year of life and beyond.

- **To stimulate healthy gums:** It is a good idea to wipe the gums at least once a day, beginning at birth, even before any teeth have erupted in your child's mouth.
- **After teeth erupt:** Wiping their gums and teeth with a piece of gauze or a damp cloth after feedings and before bedtime will help maintain good oral hygiene.
- **Once your child has several teeth:** Start using water and a soft-bristled, child-size toothbrush for daily cleaning with a small smear of fluoridated toothpaste. Some fluoride is good for strong, healthy teeth that are resistant to decay, but too much can cause dark discoloration of the teeth.

Your doctor or dentist may also apply a topical fluoride varnish (</English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Brushing-Up-on-Oral-Health-Never-Too-Early-to-Start.aspx>) at office visits to protect your baby's teeth. A first dental checkup is recommended by your baby's first birthday (</English/ages-stages/Your-Childs-Checkups/Pages/Your-Checkup-Checklist-12-Months-Old.aspx>).

More information

- [How to Prevent Tooth Decay in Your Baby \(/English/ages-stages/baby/teething-tooth-care/Pages/How-to-Prevent-Tooth-Decay-in-Your-Baby.aspx\)](/English/ages-stages/baby/teething-tooth-care/Pages/How-to-Prevent-Tooth-Decay-in-Your-Baby.aspx)
- [Brushing Up on Oral Health: Its Never Too Early To Start \(/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Brushing-Up-on-Oral-Health-Never-Too-Early-to-Start.aspx\)](/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Brushing-Up-on-Oral-Health-Never-Too-Early-to-Start.aspx)
- [Why Breastfeed: Benefits For You & Your Baby \(/English/ages-stages/baby/breastfeeding/Pages/Why-Breastfeed.aspx\)](/English/ages-stages/baby/breastfeeding/Pages/Why-Breastfeed.aspx)

Last Updated 12/15/2022

Source Adapted from New Mother's Guide to Breastfeeding, 3rd Edition (Copyright © 2017 American Academy of Pediatrics)

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