



Breast Feeding and Oral Health

Breastfeeding is one of the most natural and important activities for mom and baby. The benefits to the infant include improved nutrition, fewer illnesses, a stronger immune system, physical and developmental growth benefits, and reduced risk of chronic diseases and allergy. Benefits to maternal health include increased physiologic postpartum recovery and reduced long-term risk of obesity, osteoporosis, and breast and ovarian cancers. But did you know breastfeeding can impact the oral health of both baby and mom?

Here is how:

- **Breastfeeding may help build a better bite**
 - ✓ Every child is different, but breastfed babies are less likely to need dental services to correct crooked teeth.
- **Breastfeeding reduces the risk for baby bottle tooth decay**
 - ✓ Since the baby is not put to bed with a bottle that might be filled with liquid full of sugar, breastfed babies tend to be less likely to get cavities.
- **Breastfed babies can still get cavities**
 - ✓ Even breastmilk contains sugar, so it is important to clean the baby's teeth and gums with clean gauze or washcloth daily. When brushing, use fluoridated toothpaste no bigger than a grain of rice.
- **You do not need to stop breastfeeding when your baby gets teeth**
 - ✓ Breastfeeding is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics for baby's first year of life and the World Health Organization encourages breastfeeding up to the age of 2.
- **Double-check medications you are asked to take while breastfeeding**
 - ✓ Let your dentist know if you are pregnant or nursing so extra precautions can be taken, but it is very important you take care of yourself. Doing so is also best for the health of your child.
- **Mom, take care of yourself**
 - ✓ Cavity prevention is very important for moms too. Even sharing a spoon can transfer cavity-causing bacteria from mom to baby.
 - ✓ Stay hydrated by drinking lots of water. A dry mouth is more likely to promote cavities.
 - ✓ If mom is not healthy and taking care of herself, she will not have the energy to care for her baby.

Resources

American Dental Association

<https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/b/breastfeeding>

<https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/b/breastfeeding>

Health Resources and Services Administration

<https://mchb.hrsa.gov/maternal-child-health-topics/understanding-breastfeeding-benefits>