

HEALTHY SMILE HAPPY CHILD

*Caring for Teeth and Preventing
Early Childhood Tooth Decay*

The Manitoba Collaborative Project
for the Prevention of
Early Childhood Tooth Decay
2006



Photo: Bruce Hildebrand

Module 1

pages 2-3

Baby Teeth and Early Childhood Tooth Decay



Healthy teeth are important for a child's health. Below is an example of severe Early Childhood Tooth Decay.



- Baby teeth are important to children for learning how to eat and speak. Baby teeth also help shape the face and guide the adult teeth to the right place in the mouth.
- Early Childhood Tooth Decay happens when food and cavity-causing bacteria (germs) are left alone on your child's teeth. The bacteria (germs) feed on the food particles and leave an acid, which weakens the tooth, eventually causing Early Childhood Tooth Decay (cavities).
- If Early Childhood Tooth Decay gets serious enough, children may need to have dental surgery (an operation) in the hospital (and be put to sleep) to have rotten teeth taken out or repaired.

Baby Teeth and Early Childhood Tooth Decay



- Early Childhood Tooth Decay affects a child's health! Problems may include:
 - pain,
 - a child's growth could be affected,
 - difficulty sleeping, speaking, and eating,
 - trouble learning or concentrating because of pain,
 - feeling bad about the way they look, and
 - infections.
- Daily teeth cleaning with a soft bristle toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste*, along with regular dental check-ups are needed for a healthy mouth. Even children who have had dental surgery in a hospital under general anesthetic need regular check-ups and daily toothbrushing.

*not generally recommended before age three (3) unless advised otherwise by your dental professional or health region

Pregnancy and Good Oral Health



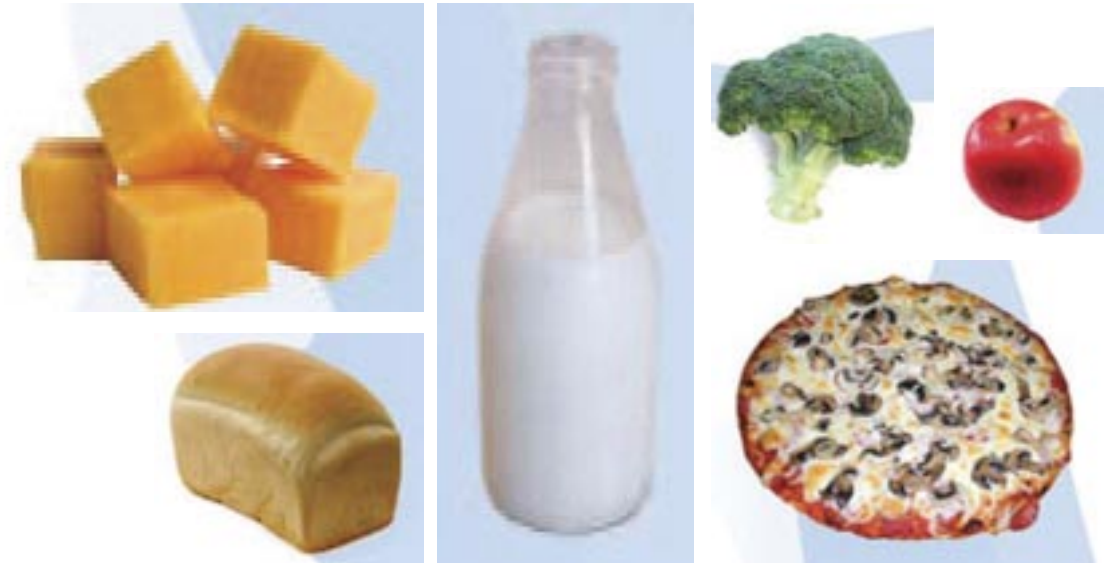
- Preventing Early Childhood Tooth Decay starts before the baby is born. It is important that pregnant women (caregivers) keep a healthy mouth to prevent passing on germs to their child.
- Caregivers, give special attention to your gums and teeth:
 - careful brushing and flossing every day,
 - visit the dental office for a cleaning, check-up and any needed treatment,
 - chew xylitol gum or rinse with water when brushing is not possible,
 - look for the warning signs of problems in your mouth like: sore or bleeding gums, bad breath, bad taste, sensitive teeth, pain, signs of tooth decay.

Pregnancy and Good Oral Health



Photo: Bruce Hildebrand

During and after pregnancy a growing baby needs calcium and vitamin D from healthy foods to build strong teeth and bones.



Sources of calcium: milk (fresh or made from powder), fortified (calcium added) soy beverage, food made with milk or fortified soy beverage, cheese, orange juice with added calcium.

You can also get some calcium from fatty fish, fish heads and by eating salmon and sardines with their bones. Indian corn, almonds and broccoli also have some calcium but not enough to provide all the calcium needed.

Sources of vitamin D: The body makes vitamin D when skin is exposed to sunshine. Extra vitamin D is needed in the winter.

The best sources of vitamin D are prenatal vitamins and milk (fresh or powdered), fortified soy beverage and food made with milk or fortified soy beverage. Fatty fish, eggs and margarine provide a little vitamin D.

Module 2a

The First Tooth



Caregivers, learn:

- That baby teeth begin to develop as early as six (6) weeks of pregnancy;
- When the baby teeth come in (See the eruption chart above);
- To reduce teething pain by allowing a child to suck on a clean, cold, wet cloth;
- The warning signs of Early Childhood Tooth Decay (See module #5: Lift the Lip);
- That Early Childhood Tooth Decay can begin as soon as the first tooth comes in;
- To keep a baby's mouth clean (see module #6: Cleaning Your Child's Teeth).

Module 3

pages 7-8

Good Family Oral Health



- Mothers, family members and caregivers can pass cavity-causing bacteria (germs) to infants and young children.
- Transmission of bacteria (germs) happens by saliva exchange: like testing temperature of bottles or food; tasting or sharing food, cups or utensils; by sharing toothbrushes; and even by cleaning bottle nipples or soothers in your mouth.
- Be a good role model for your child. Keeping your mouth clean every day is a good example for kids to see.

Module 3

pages 7-8

Good Family Oral Health



Each family member should visit a dental professional at least once every year.

- Each person should have his or her own toothbrush. Clean your teeth at least once a day, especially before bedtime. Only water should be allowed between night time brushing and bedtime—no other drinks or food.
- Use a fluoride toothpaste for persons three (3) years of age and older.* Use a toothbrush with soft bristles.
- Flossing teeth is important for cleaning areas between teeth where a toothbrush cannot reach.
- All family members should visit a dental professional at least once a year.

* unless advised otherwise by your dental professional or health region

You don't need an expensive toothbrush. The main thing is to have a brush with soft bristles.



Feeding Practices



- Breast feeding is best. Be sure baby swallows the milk before falling asleep, so the milk does not stay on the teeth.
- Give breastfed babies vitamin D* (ask nurse or doctor). Remember teeth are still developing and need vitamin D.
- Clean baby's mouth after breast feeding or bottle feeding. Early Childhood Tooth Decay bacteria (germs) like both breast milk and formula.
- If teeth are not cleaned daily, most food and drinks can lead to Early Childhood Tooth Decay.

* supplements may be necessary

Feeding Practices



- Bottles, lidless sippy cups and regular cups
 - Do not prop a child's bottle. This keeps the drink around the baby's teeth where bacteria (germs) will get at them.
 - Wean children off a bottle to a regular cup or lidless sippy cup by age one (1) year.
 - Serve sweet drinks in a regular cup only—never in the bottle. Serve sweet drinks only at meal times. Serve plain water between meals.
 - Each sip of a sweet drink or snack causes a 20-minute sugar, germ and acid attack on your child's teeth.
 - If a bedtime/naptime bottle or sippy cup is necessary, give plain water only. Even formula and other healthy drinks can cause Early Childhood Tooth Decay if they are put in bedtime/naptime bottles. Do not allow a baby to go to bed with the bottle (except with plain water).

Feeding Practices



- Avoid drinks and treats with a lot of sugar. Early Childhood Tooth Decay bacteria (germs) love sugar, so clean a child's teeth daily and especially after eating sweets.
- If a child likes to eat often or snack a lot, clean his or her teeth more often.
- Once a child is eating solid food, be sure to have calcium and vitamin D rich foods in their daily meals. (See Module #2, page 5: Pregnancy and Good Oral Health)

Lift the Lip



WARNING SIGNS

- After the child's first tooth comes in, lift the child's lip once a month to check the teeth for signs of Early Childhood Tooth Decay.
- Check the front and back of teeth. Look for white chalky lines or spots on the teeth along the gumline. If you see this, take the child to see a dental professional.
- If ignored, the white marks turn into dark brown cavities and serious tooth decay.
- Tooth decay can become painful and may cause infections.
- You can prevent Early Childhood Tooth Decay by paying careful attention to a child's teeth.

Cleaning Your Child's Teeth



Plaque is the whitish substance which forms on your teeth every day. It is full of germs and needs to be brushed off daily.



- Keep a baby's mouth clean:
 - Use a soft clean cloth to clean baby's mouth before teeth are showing (birth until first tooth shows)
 - Use a soft bristle toothbrush once teeth appear
 - Clean the mouth and teeth after feeding times and especially before bedtime/naptime.
- Brush plaque away from the gumline to remove bacteria (germs) and food particles from the teeth.
- Use a small smear of fluoride toothpaste* for cleaning your child's teeth, unless otherwise advised by your child's dental professional.

* not generally recommended before age three (3) unless advised otherwise by your dental professional or health region

Cleaning Your Child's Teeth



Photo: Bruce Hildebrand



Your dental professional can explain and show you proper brushing techniques. Use a soft bristle toothbrush to clear plaque away from the gumline. Brush front and back of teeth and work to remove any food particles which might be stuck in tight spots around the teeth.

- Teach and help a child with brushing teeth until age eight (8) years.
- Use floss regularly once the spaces between baby teeth close.
- Brush and floss your teeth in front of your child to set a good example.
- If a child can safely chew gum without swallowing it, offer sugarless gum with xylitol. Xylitol helps reduce harmful bacteria (germs) in the mouth.

Module 7

pages 15-16

Act Early to Prevent Early Childhood Tooth Decay



By having regular dental visits, a dental professional can detect any problems before they become serious.

- A child should have his or her first dental visit by age one (1) year, and at least once a year after that.
- Leaving teeth unchecked may lead to painful Early Childhood Tooth Decay.
- A dental health professional can help in deciding how often a child needs to be seen.
- This attention will help to keep a child free from Early Childhood Tooth Decay.
- Help a child avoid the need for dental surgery. Don't wait until it's too late.

Module 7
pages 15-16

**Act Early to
Prevent Early
Childhood
Tooth Decay**



In your community, the following dental professionals will see children as young as 12 months of age:

Take advantage of dental services and benefits that are available to your child. If you do not have dental benefits, these may be affordable options:

Prevention and Management



Clean your child's teeth after meals and before bedtime.

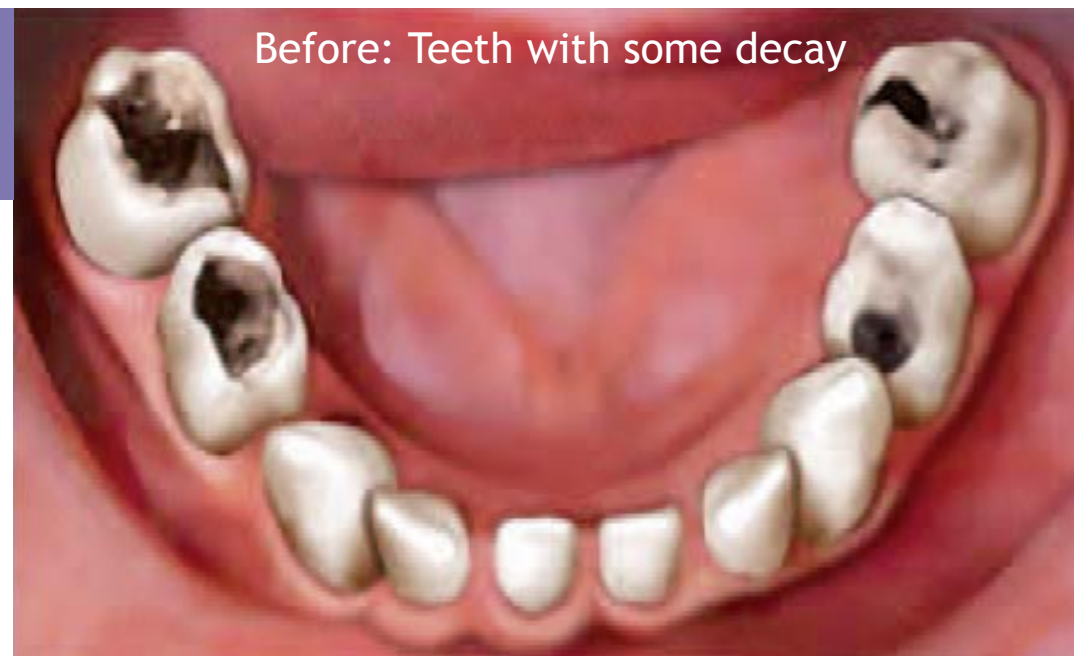
- Clean a child's teeth after eating and before bedtime.
- Use fluoride toothpaste* for brushing a child's teeth.
- Start annual visits to the dental professional by age one (1) year.
- Children with severe Early Childhood Tooth Decay will experience pain and may require dental surgery under general anesthesia.
- Keeping teeth clean and having fluoride in drinking water and toothpaste are the best ways to prevent Early Childhood Tooth Decay.

* not generally recommended before age three (3) unless advised otherwise by your dental professional or health region

Prevention and Management



- Fluoride is safe and effective at preventing Early Childhood Tooth Decay (cavities).
 - Fluoride in drinking water helps to make teeth strong and resist tooth decay.
 - Fluoride is found naturally in some well water.
 - Fluoride in drinking water may be adjusted to match ideal levels. Check if your water has the right amount of fluoride. If not, speak to a dental professional about options.
 - Fluoride in toothpaste helps keep teeth strong and resist tooth decay.
 - Fluoride varnish protects teeth and can stop cavities from getting worse (see Module #8, page 20: Fluoride Varnish)



- Chewing sugarless gum with xylitol helps prevent cavities.
- Sealants on baby teeth and adult teeth can help prevent cavities. They are thin plastic coatings applied to pits and grooves of teeth.
- ART (Alternative Restorative Treatment) is a simple and painless procedure. It uses a special filling material that releases fluoride to manage Early Childhood Tooth Decay. ART may help avoid the need for dental surgery. Drills are not required.

Fluoride Varnish



- Fluoride varnish helps to prevent Early Childhood Tooth Decay and can stop cavities from getting worse.
- Fluoride varnish is a protective liquid covering for teeth. It contains fluoride which strengthens the tooth.
- It can be applied to children's teeth with a small brush.
- It is painless, fast to apply and safe for children.
- The taste is unpleasant.
- It can be applied in the dental office or elsewhere (home, day care or school) by a trained community worker.
- Talk to a dental professional to see if the child may benefit from fluoride varnish.

Community Development: Here are ideas on how to share the material contained in this manual.

1 Early Childhood Tooth Decay affects a child's overall health. Share this information with other community programs and workers who focus on child health and development.

2 Encourage others who have contact with pregnant women to talk about oral health care as part of their work. For example: workers doing prenatal check-ups, prenatal classes and Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP).

3 By promoting the value of teeth and good oral health care for the whole family, you can help caregivers recognize the value of baby teeth and the importance of protecting them.

4 Share this information with others who talk about infant and child nutrition so they can add these messages to their education plans and keep messages to caregivers consistent.

5 Teach parents and program workers how to Lift the Lip. Show parents of young children how to Lift the Lip and check teeth.

6 One of the best ways for parents to teach children that teeth are important and need to be cared for is to take care of their own teeth in front of their children.

7 Community workers can encourage caregivers to take their child for a dental visit by their first birthday. Workers can give them information on where to go.

8 By informing parents about painless options for preventing and treating/managing Early Childhood Tooth Decay, you give them additional tools for protecting their child's teeth and avoiding dental surgery.

9 Consider doing fluoride varnish visits to community programs for preschoolers and babies.

Credits

This manual was produced in 2006 by the Healthy Smile Happy Child project. The Healthy Smile Happy Child project is managed by the Manitoba Collaborative Project for the Prevention of Early Childhood Tooth Decay, which includes the following:

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