Caring for your baby’s teeth.

Helpful hints from Sma Nutrition

Endorsed by British Dental Health Foundation
Introduction.

A baby's first tooth is an exciting time for any parent. It is one more stage in baby's growing up, just like walking and talking. Naturally, all parents want to make sure their baby's teeth remain strong and healthy as they grow. Your dentist and other health professionals will be able to advise you on how to look after your baby's teeth. Whilst not intended to replace that advice, this booklet will give you some reminders on good feeding practice and dental care.
Your baby’s first teeth.

Your baby’s first teeth (called milk teeth or primary teeth) are important because they will help prepare the way for a set of healthy, straight, adult teeth. Most babies have one or two teeth by 7 months of age, but because all babies grow at different rates don’t worry if they appear before or after that time. By 2½ to 3 years of age, most of your baby’s milk teeth will have appeared.

You will probably see the signs of teething, which may include some or all of the following: dribbling more than usual, flushed cheeks, difficulty in sleeping, restlessness, chewing or biting on hard surfaces.

How the teeth come in.

Teeth normally appear in the numerical order shown in this diagram:

- Upper front teeth usually follow the lower fronts
- Upper side teeth come in next
- These are followed by the lower side teeth
- Lower fronts are normally the first teeth to arrive
Brushing your baby’s teeth.

Good dental habits started early in life can maintain strong and healthy teeth and provide a good start for the adult teeth. Brushing is important because any food or drink left around the teeth could cause decay.

- Before your baby’s teeth appear, it will not do any harm to keep the gums clean and healthy. With a clean finger and a soft, clean cloth or cotton bud, wipe away any milk on the gums and gently clean them.

- At around 6-7 months, you may also wish to gently massage your baby’s gums with special trainer brushes. These look like toothbrushes but have rubber heads. They are designed to stimulate the gums and introduce the baby to the feel of a toothbrush. They do not harm the baby’s gums or teeth and can be given to the baby to chew on before the first teeth emerge. NEVER leave your baby unattended with these brushes because of the risk of choking.

- Start to clean your baby’s teeth as soon as they appear. At first you may want to gently rub them with a soft cloth or cotton bud. When your child has two teeth or more you should use a soft baby toothbrush with a pea sized amount of fluoride baby toothpaste. Remember to brush gently as babies have tender gums which can easily be hurt by brushing too hard.
Initially, when there are only one or two teeth, try to clean them at least once a day. When more teeth appear, this can be increased to twice daily.

- Remember to brush on the inner sides of the teeth and between the teeth, and on the biting surfaces at the back of the mouth. Always check to see if there are any new teeth which need cleaning.

- Clean your baby's teeth after the last feed at night. Don't give your child anything to eat or drink afterwards. If your child remains thirsty, offer cooled, boiled water only. After 7-8 months, if your baby wakes in the night, it is usually for comfort, not hunger and because he is in the habit of doing so. Make sure he is comfortable, (dry nappy, warm enough, etc), soothe him and encourage him back to sleep. If really necessary, offer only cooled, boiled water to drink, where possible from a beaker. Let your baby drink what he needs then remove the beaker.

- Brushing should always be supervised by a parent until the child is at least 8 years old.