

# Breastfeeding and Oral Health

## Oral Health Fact Sheet



**Breastfeeding is one of the most natural and important activities for mom and baby — but did you know it can impact the oral health of both?**

### QUICK FACT

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 allergies. Benefits to maternal health include increased physiologic postpartum recovery and reduced long-term risk of obesity, osteoporosis, and breast and ovarian cancers.

### WHAT BREASTFEEDING DOES FOR BABY'S TEETH

- **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 of liquid full of sugar, breastfed babies tend to be less likely to get cavities
- **Breastfed babies can still get cavities** — breastmilk still 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

### MEDICATIONS WHILE BREASTFEEDING



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.

### 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

### KEEP BREASTFEEDING

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding for baby's first year of life. The World Health Organization encourages breastfeeding up to the age of 2. You do not need to stop when your baby gets teeth.



### RESOURCES

American Dental Association — Mouth Healthy: [mouthhealthy.org/all-topics-a-z/breastfeeding](https://www.mouthhealthy.org/all-topics-a-z/breastfeeding)  
Health Resources and Services Administration: [mchb.hrsa.gov/programs-impact/focus-areas/maternal-health/mchb-supports-breastfeeding](https://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs-impact/focus-areas/maternal-health/mchb-supports-breastfeeding)



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