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BABY BOTTLE AND TOOTH DECAY

Baby Bottle Tooth Decay (BBTD) is a major cause of tooth decay in infants. If left untreated, it can lead to infection, pain in teeth, early loss of baby teeth and crooked and decaying permanent teeth.

HOW DOES BABY BOTTLE TOOTH DECAY (BBTD) OCCUR

BBTD occurs when the child's teeth and gums remain in contact with any liquid, other than water or saliva, for a long time. This can happen if the child goes to bed with a bottle of formula or normal milk, fruit juice or any sugary drink. Breastfeeding for longer than a meal time can also cause BBTD.

When any liquid other than water or saliva builds up in the mouth, the bacteria in the mouth can convert the traces of natural or artificial sugar in the liquid into acid, which can dissolve the teeth, causing them to decay.

IMPORTANCE OF BABY TEETH

It is commonly assumed that baby teeth will be replaced by permanent teeth anyway, so any damage to them would not have an impact on permanent teeth. In reality, however, taking care of baby teeth is critically important because they act as guides to crowns of the future permanent teeth. If baby teeth fall out too early, they may negatively impact the growth of permanent teeth.

EARLY MANAGEMENT OF DECAY

A child with tooth decay needs to get immediate care to prevent lasting damage to the teeth. Decay can start as white spots which may only be visible with proper equipment. A dentist or dental hygienist is the best person to consult if decay is suspected.

PREVENTION TIPS

- Use baby bottles only during meals and not as pacifiers.
- Keep the baby's mouth clean. Brushing with a soft brush should be started after feeding once the child gets a tooth in the mouth.

- From the time they are 7-8 months old, children often stop needing night time feeding. If it is still needed, ensure to not leave the bottle in the mouth and replace any sugared liquid with water.
- Any extended use of bottle feeding beyond one year of age affects the weaning to normal food. This might even lead to poor growth parameters because of relying on milk as the sole source of nutrition. Speak with a paediatrician to make gradual changes to your child's dietary habits and replace liquids with solids or semi-solids.
- Teach your child to drink from a cup by one year of age. To make it easier for them to transition from a bottle, you can start by using a sippy cup or a cup with a tight fitting lid and a straw.
- By the time the child is 2 years old, establish a routine of them brushing their teeth twice a day - after breakfast and dinner.
- By 3 years of age, start using fluoride toothpaste approximately the size of pea.



References: http://sebpmg.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Baby_Bottle_Tooth_Decay.pdf