

# Is your toddler (1 to 2 years) at risk for dental caries (tooth decay)?

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## Risk level

Our assessment of your toddler's risk of developing tooth decay in the next year or so is:

### Low dental caries risk

Ways to stay at low risk are:

- Brush teeth especially at bedtime using a wet washcloth or wet toothbrush.
- Choose food wisely by following the Food Guide Pyramid.
- Encourage drinking milk or water instead of fruit juices or soda pop.
- Visit your dental professional as prescribed.

### High dental caries risk

The primary factor(s) contributing to your child's high level of risk are:

- Bacteria:  Active tooth decay  Recent history of tooth decay
- Visible plaque on teeth  Mother's/primary caregiver's recent history of tooth decay
- Inadequate fluoride exposure
- Dietary habits
- Medical factors

## Ways to reduce the risk of future tooth decay for your child are:

- Wean your toddler off the bottle by one year of age.
- Encourage using a cup.
- Reduce the frequency of sugary, sticky and starchy food. Reduce long exposure to these foods on your child's teeth.
- Encourage drinking fluoridated water instead of fruit juices.
- Drink fruit juices during a meal rather than throughout the day.
- Increase fluoride exposure:
  - fluoride supplements
  - fluoridated water
  - fluoride applications in dental office
  - fluoridated tooth paste (*less* than a pea-size amount if your toddler can't rinse and spit out, especially at bedtime)

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- Get applications of an anti-bacterial rinse in the dental office.
- Parent or guardian is advised to control his own tooth decay.
- Visit your dental professional every three to six months (if at high risk for tooth decay).
- Visit your dental professional as prescribed.

### **Special caries management appointments**

- More frequent dental visits to monitor efforts to reduce high risk level.

Special instructions: \_\_\_\_\_

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- Visit your dental professional every 9 to 12 months.

### **Anticipatory guidance**

#### **Age 12 months:**

- Do not allow your infant to breast feed “at will” throughout the night.
- Do not allow bottles in bed.
- Begin weaning your child off the bottle.
- Begin brushing using a very small amount of toothpaste (e.g., less than a pea-sized amount).
- Discuss teething concerns and tips with your dentist.
- Discuss how your recent history of tooth decay can affect your infant’s chances of developing tooth decay.
- Discuss your attitude toward oral health with your dentist.
- Minimize the chance your infant will fall and injure her teeth or mouth by:
  - Using a car seat at all times
  - Using safety gates at the top and bottom of the stairs
  - Lowering the crib mattress to its lowest position
  - Using plastic protectors on sharp corners of furniture
  - Using safety belts for high chairs
  - Paying close, careful attention

#### **Age 2 years:**

- Be a good role model for your child by practicing healthy eating habits.
- Begin to teach your child healthy eating habits.
- Choose food and beverages wisely. Slowly dissolving and sticky foods remain on teeth longer. This increases the time for the bacteria that causes tooth decay, to produce acids that cause tooth decay.
- Limit “grazing” behavior (e.g., eating throughout the day). The more exposures to cooked starches and sugars increase, the more likely it is that your child will develop tooth decay.
- Be a good role model for your child by practicing good brushing and flossing habits.
- Be persistent in brushing your child’s teeth.
- Use a car seat at all times to minimize injury to the mouth.