

Tooth decay in young children can be costly and complicated. The information below includes tips for parents of young children to ensure you can give your child's teeth the best start in life. For more information please contact your dental professional. Contact details for our public service is available at <http://metrosouth.health.qld.gov.au/oral-health/appointment-information> .

How to keep a healthy smile for babies and young children

- Babies are born without the bacterium that causes decay. It comes from the mouths of parents and others close to the baby. The best way to make sure this does not happen is for the adults and family of the baby themselves to have healthy teeth and mouths.
- Parents should brush their children's teeth for them from the minute teeth first appear in the mouth until the age of 8. After that, children can start to brush for themselves while a parent supervises.
- Brush twice daily with a small, soft toothbrush and water. Once baby is 18 months old use a small pea-sized amount of children's low fluoride toothpaste. After the age of six, children should use adult fluoride toothpaste.
- Children should spit toothpaste out after brushing.
- Babies should be breastfed until 12 months old if possible.
- But if using a bottle, make sure only breast milk, formula or cooled, boiled tap water is used, and take the bottle away as soon as baby has finished drinking.
- Never put baby to bed with the bottle.
- Give older children plenty of tap water to drink.
- Look in your child's mouth for signs of decay and other problems. Early signs might be white, brown or yellow marks on the teeth, or redness, bleeding or ulcers on the gums.
- Take your child for a dental check- up by the time they turn two, or even earlier if you notice problems.

