

<b>Meta Title</b>	What Is Baby Bottle Tooth Decay?   West Coast Dental
<b>Meta Description</b>	Children need strong, healthy teeth to chew their food, speak, and smile. But did you know baby teeth are more susceptible to decay than adult teeth? Unfortunately, this type of tooth decay, known as baby bottle tooth decay, is relatively common in children. Let's look at its causes, its side effects, and how to treat and prevent it.
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## What is Baby Bottle Tooth Decay?

by Sarah Carpenter

Children need strong, healthy teeth to chew their food, speak and smile. Did you know baby teeth are more susceptible to decay than adult teeth? Unfortunately, this type of tooth decay — known as baby bottle tooth decay — is relatively common in children. We'll learn what baby bottle tooth decay is, its causes, its side effects and how to treat and prevent it from happening in the first place.

### What Is Baby Bottle Tooth Decay?

Even though they're temporary, a child's baby teeth are important. Their first teeth help make sure their adult teeth come in correctly. However, they are very sensitive to decay (cavities). [Compared to adult teeth](#), baby teeth are more susceptible to decay because they have a thinner layer of enamel — the hard outer surface of the teeth. [Tooth decay in infants](#) and toddlers is often referred to as baby bottle tooth decay.

### What Causes It?

This type of decay occurs most often in the upper front teeth, but it's possible to be found in all of them. There are many causes of tooth decay. One cause is the frequent, prolonged exposure of the child's teeth to drinks that contain sugar such as milk, formula and fruit juice. It can occur when the child is put to bed with a bottle or when a bottle is used as a pacifier when they're fussy. Bacteria thrives on sugary debris and creates acids that begin attacking teeth.

Tooth decay is also a disease that can begin with cavity-causing bacteria being passed from parent to child through the parent's saliva. One example is if they put the child's feeding spoon in their own mouth or clean a child's pacifier in their mouth. In addition, if a child does not receive adequate fluoride, they may also have an increased risk for tooth decay. The good news is that decay is preventable but starting children with good oral care is essential to help protect their teeth for decades to come.

### Signs and Symptoms of Baby Bottle Tooth Decay

Early signs and symptoms of baby bottle tooth decay are white spots on the surface of the teeth or on the gum line, tooth sensitivity and pain. Advanced stages of decay can appear as dark or brown spots on the teeth. As the decay worsens, children might experience pain, swelling and bleeding around the

teeth, fever and bad breath. However, these signs and symptoms may be hard to see without proper equipment because a baby's teeth are so small. [That's why it's recommended](#) to take your baby to a pediatrician or pediatric dentist at six months when their teeth first start to erupt (grow in). That way, you can get a clear plan on how to take care of your baby's new teeth and prevent any early decay right from the start.

## How to Prevent It

Preventing baby bottle tooth decay involves a mix of being aware of what you put in your baby's mouth and maintaining simple routine care.

- After you feed your baby, wipe their gums clean with a damp washcloth or gauze pad.
- Avoid sharing saliva with your baby through spoons or pacifiers.
- When their teeth come in, brush them gently with a child-sized toothbrush and a rice-sized grain amount of fluoride toothpaste.
- Use only formula, breast milk or milk in your baby's bottle, and avoid liquids like sugary juices or soft drinks.
- Make sure your infant finishes their bottles before bed and nap times.
- Ensure pacifiers are clean and not coated in sugar or honey.
- When breastfeeding, remove the nipple from the baby's mouth once they're asleep.

## Treatment Options

[If left untreated](#), baby bottle tooth decay can cause pain, infection and tooth loss. If the baby teeth don't develop properly, babies may develop poor eating habits or have speech problems. Their adult teeth could grow in crookedly, causing crowding. Thankfully, treatment for baby bottle tooth decay is available and effective. According to the [Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research](#), tooth decay reversal is possible, and enamel can be repaired — most notably through fluoride. The first step is to contact your pediatrician or pediatric dentist. They'll help you develop a treatment plan depending on your child's age and severity of the condition.

Specific treatments will depend on the severity of your child's case. Your dental professional may recommend fluoride treatments such as a fluoride toothpaste, in-office treatment that may include silver diamine fluoride which can remineralize the enamel and dentin or mouthrinses. More severe cases might call for pit-and-fissure sealants to help prevent and control cavities. Finally, your dentist might recommend giving your child low- or non-cariogenic snacks like cheese, crunchy vegetables and nut butters, drinking fluoridated water and limiting sugar-containing foods and drinks.

For more serious cases of tooth decay, the [American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry](#) states that stainless steel crowns may be used with large cavities and don't require any maintenance or retreatment. In the most severe cases, teeth might need to be extracted. This is more likely to be necessary if the tooth is infected or has decayed so extensively that it cannot be restored.

## Contact West Coast Dental Today

Though baby bottle tooth decay is relatively common in children, it's preventable. After your baby is born, it's advised that you start developing good oral health care habits and check in with your pediatrician or pediatric dentist when your baby turns 6-months-old or when their first tooth appears.

We're here to help — contact West Coast Dental anytime. We are pleased to accept most [dental insurance plans](#). Give us a call at [888-329-8111](tel:888-329-8111) to make an appointment or [book online](#).

*Sarah Carpenter is a freelance writer whose portfolio spans the industries of healthcare, higher education and entertainment. Find out more at [her website](#).*

## References

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