



Risk factors for infant cavities:

- Sibling dental decay before the age of 5.
- Use of a bottle at nap time or before going to sleep.
- Excessive sweets, juice or sticky foods in diet.
- Inadequate routine brushing and cleaning.
- Insufficient fluoride in water or lack of supplements.
- Chalky white spots on teeth.

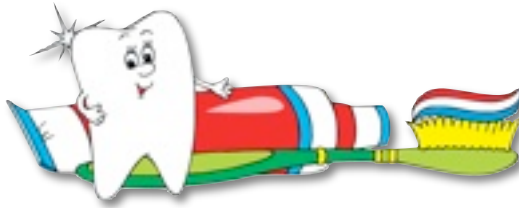
Fluoride is important to your child's health*

Fluoride in water has been proven to reduce cavities by up to 50%. Fluoride:

- Helps developing enamel become strong and resistant to decay.
- Slows the growth of bacteria.
- Is a mineral that makes your child's tooth enamel harder and more resistant to decay.
- Is found naturally in some of the foods your child eats (fish, grape juice, green leafy vegetables).

Most bottled water does not contain fluoride. Many communities now have fluoride added to the public water supplies to give residents the proper amounts they need to ward off cavities. Talk to your dentist or hygienist to see if your child needs more fluoride. They can discuss topical fluoride or prescribe fluoride supplements to help protect your child's teeth against decay.

*Check with your dentist or pediatrician before using toothpaste with fluoride on children under 2 years of age.



Xylitol

Xylitol is a natural sweetener found in many plants and fruits. Xylitol has been shown in many clinical studies to prevent dental caries (cavities) and even stops or reverses tooth decay. Xylitol is not easily digested by the bacteria that causes tooth decay, unlike glucose and sucrose, so bacteria do not get 'sticky' and do not produce decay-causing acids.

Regular use of xylitol reduces the levels of the germs that cause tooth decay. Products containing xylitol include tooth wipes, oral rinses, toothpaste, mints, candies, tooth gel, pacifiers and gum.

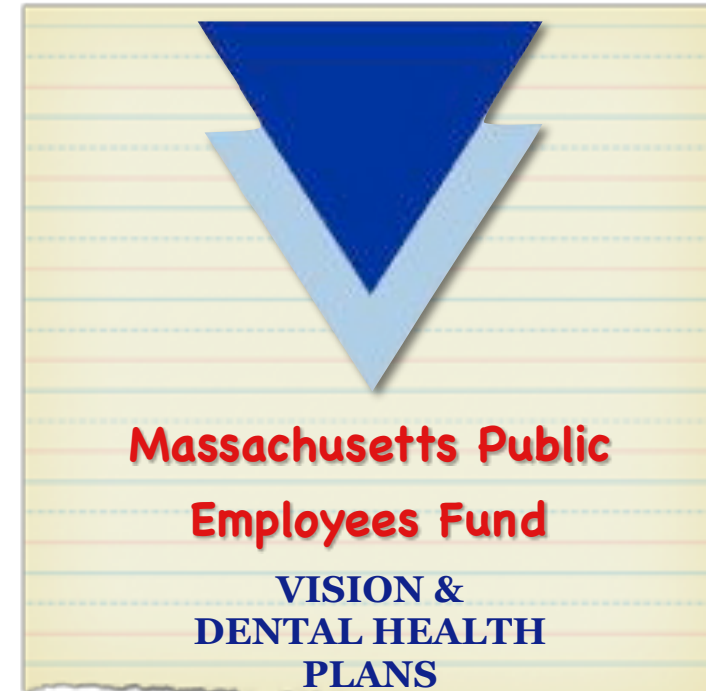
Xylitol products can be purchased at local health food stores, other markets and online.

Xylitol is poisonous to dogs!!

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Information obtained from Delta Dental and the American Association of Pediatric Dentistry



**Massachusetts Public
Employees Fund**

**VISION &
DENTAL HEALTH
PLANS**

**A QUICK GUIDE TO
EARLY CHILDHOOD
DENTAL CARE**





WHAT YOU CAN DO

0-6 MONTHS

The appearance of primary (baby) teeth usually begins when children are about 6 months old. The front four teeth usually erupt first. It is important to help your baby form healthy teeth. Healthy baby teeth are all one color. If you see spots or stains on any teeth, take your baby to a dentist.

- ✓ New mothers or intimate caregivers should brush their own teeth with fluoridated toothpaste and floss two times a day, and rinse every night with alcohol free fluoride mouth rinse. Also, chewing two pieces of xylitol gum four times a day has been shown to reduce the bacteria that cause tooth decay.
- ✓ Clean your baby's gums and teeth with a clean cloth using plain water after each feeding.
- ✓ Don't let your child have a bottle with anything other than plain water in bed or before going to sleep.

7 TO 11 MONTHS

Lower incisors erupt first at about 8 months and upper incisors at about 10 months. As your baby starts to eat soft foods, include healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables. In addition:

- ✓ Don't let your child have a bottle with anything other than plain water in bed or before going to sleep.
- ✓ Brush infant's teeth with water twice a day as soon as the first tooth erupts. Wiping your child's teeth with a tiny amount of fluoridated toothpaste will help strengthen tooth enamel.
- ✓ Encourage cup use beginning at about 7 months.
- ✓ Limit or dilute juice and avoid sweets. Make sure water is readily available and encourage your child to drink it more often.

Good oral health starts early!

The MPE Fund realizes how important it is to begin promoting good oral health at an early age. That's why we put together this guide especially for you and your children.

Before your baby is born, make sure you visit the dentist to see about reducing your chance of transmitting tooth decay bacteria.

Childhood caries is a preventable, infectious disease caused by specific acid-producing bacteria. It is the result of an untreated transmitted bacterial infection. Bacteria are usually passed from the mother or other caregiver to a child via saliva. Bacteria can develop before the eruption of teeth.



- ✓ Make an appointment for your child's first dental visit within 6 months of eruption of the first tooth and no later than 12 months of age.

12 TO 24 MONTHS

First molars begin to erupt at about 16 months, canines at 20 months. The critical period for enamel formation of permanent incisors is between 18 and 24 months. Strong enamel helps prevent cavities. Healthy foods make enamel strong.

- ✓ Reinforce sound nutrition. Limit sweetened fruit drinks and non-nutritious snack foods.
- ✓ Be sure your child's diet is balanced with foods from the five major food groups:
 - Breads, cereals and other grain products
 - Fruits and vegetables
 - Meat, poultry, fish, beans, eggs
 - Milk, cheese, yogurt
- ✓ Visit the dentist to have your child checked for early cavities.

25 TO 36 MONTHS

Second molars usually erupt at approximately 25 months. They are the last of the primary (baby) teeth to erupt.

- ✓ Regular dental visits should continue. Discuss with your child's dentist the need for topically applied fluoride and fluoride supplements.
- ✓ Continue to promote sound nutrition.
- ✓ Brush your child's teeth twice a day with no more



than a pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste and have him spit but not rinse. Preferably, teeth should be brushed first thing in the morning and once before bedtime. The last thing that touches your child's teeth is a toothbrush with fluoride toothpaste!