

Oral Hygiene in Babies. Everything you Need to Know

K Machorro^{1*} and N Mendoza²

¹*Pediatric Dentist, Puebla, Mexico*

²*Student of UDLAP, Mexico*

***Corresponding Author:** K Machorro, Pediatric Dentist, Puebla, Mexico.

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At what age should I start caring for my baby's mouth? How do I care for my baby's mouth? What do I need for oral hygiene if they don't have teeth yet? Do I need to use anything else when their teeth erupt?

Caring means preserving, knowing, and performing all the actions to keep your baby's oral cavity healthy (teeth, gingival ridges, gums, cheeks, lips, palate, frenulum, etc.), and this is how it all begins from pregnancy.

The first 1000 days of a baby's life is a period called the golden interval, due to its importance, starting from 270 days of gestation, 365 days of the first year of life, and 365 days of the second year. All the programming about oral care will be transmitted to your baby at early ages, as everything will be reflected from those first days.

Your baby's mouth is a very sensitive and important part for developing different oral functions such as sucking, swallowing, chewing, breathing, so promoting breastfeeding will favor the development of different orofacial structures, for example, avoiding malocclusions.

Oral care in babies

When your baby is exclusively breastfed, the recommendation is NOT to perform oral hygiene with gauze or silicone finger brush to remove breast milk. Why? Because breast milk has different properties in its composition, and that contribution would be removed, allowing the entry of bacteria, viruses, and fungi. If your baby is NOT exclusively breastfed, I recommend performing oral hygiene once a day with a damp gauze and purified water.

(Figure 1)



Figure 1

Baby toothbrush

At the eruption of the first tooth (approximately 6 months), it is recommended to use a baby toothbrush with:

- Extra soft bristles
- Small and rubbery head
- Handle that provides a good grip

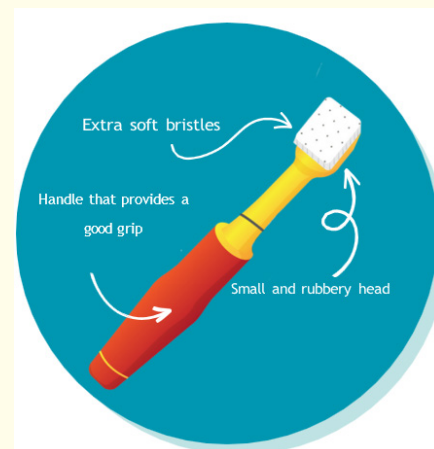


Figure 2

Early age toothpaste

Different research indicates that in babies and preschoolers, the risk of developing cavities is 14% LOWER in children who use toothpaste with fluoride above 1000 ppm (parts per million). This information can be found in the ingredients of the toothpaste, while the risk is 13% HIGHER in children who use low-fluoride concentration or fluoride-free toothpaste [1].

With this knowledge, the recommendation for your baby is to use toothpaste with fluoride (above 1000 ppm) as indicated in the ingredients, starting from the eruption of the first tooth, in a small amount since it is safe in terms of fluorosis, and the anti-cavity benefit will be maintained [2].

Quantities according to your baby's age:

- Eruption of the first tooth to 1 year - HALF A GRAIN OF DRY RICE
- 1 year to three years - ONE GRAIN OF DRY RICE
- From 4 years onward - ONE PEA [2]

Dental floss or flosser

75% of cavities occur in the interproximal spaces between teeth. We should use an auxiliary tool in oral hygiene such as dental floss or flosser when two teeth touch each other.

It should be used before toothbrushing to remove all food debris and allow better access for the toothbrush bristles and the fluoride in the toothpaste to have the desired effect.

Tips to improve dental brushing in babies and preschoolers

We know that to promote oral care, we must engage in dental brushing, but it will always be a significant challenge for you as during your baby's growth and development, we will be forming a habit.

A habit "is the repetition of a custom that involves internalizing an action naturally until it becomes a spontaneous attitude".

The formation of habits is super important for our children. It has been proven that it will help them to relate to their environment more effectively, with greater security and self-confidence among other things. There are habits related to nutrition, sleep, rest, etc.



Figure 3

How can we motivate them to brush their teeth?

- Music: Listen to their favorite song or one with lyrics about dental brushing.
- Use plush toys or favorite dolls to demonstrate brushing.
- Lead by example: Your own actions are incredibly important. If they see you doing it, they'll likely be motivated to follow suit.

Indeed, we can conclude that oral care will be transmitted from early ages, taught and guided by mothers, fathers, or caregivers with a lot of love, empowerment, and patience.

Our goal is to ensure that our children take care of their oral health by implementing all preventive measures, to always provide positive dental experiences in the most didactic and fun way possible.

Bibliography

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