

# **Baby Bottle Tooth Decay**

## **What is Baby Bottle Tooth Decay?**

Baby Bottle Tooth Decay is a dental condition that could end up destroying all of a child's teeth. Also known as nursing-bottle or nursing-mouth syndrome, this condition is commonly caused by frequent exposure of the teeth to sugary liquids. Many of these liquids we commonly give to our children when they get fussy or even when we are putting them down for a nap. These liquids include breast milk, formula, fruit juice, and many other sweetened liquids. The teeth that are of main concern for decay are the upper front teeth, but other teeth are just as likely to be damaged.

## **Why does decay occur?**

When a child's teeth remain in contact with sugary liquids for extended periods of time there is an abundance of sugar available for bacteria to thrive. The bacteria uses the sugar to produce different types of acid. Baby Bottle Tooth Decay is caused by acid attacking the enamel of the teeth. These attacks can last as long as 20 minutes and after several of these attacks, tooth decay can start to occur. Alone, different types of drinks won't cause tooth decay. How often and how long the teeth are in contact with these acids is what leads to tooth decay. This is why it is not a good idea to give a child a bottle with these liquids in it, before sleep or instead of a pacifier. When your child sleeps, the flow of saliva in the mouth decreases and this allows the liquid to sit and pool on the child's teeth for extended periods of time.

## **What can you do to help prevent Baby Bottle Tooth Decay?**

- ❖ To help care for your baby's teeth at an early age, wipe their gums and teeth with a clean gauze pad or washcloth after every feeding. You can begin to do this as soon as the first tooth appears in the mouth. Begin brushing the teeth at this time also and flossing can start when all 20 of the baby teeth have appeared, this is usually by the age 2 to 2 1/2 years.
- ❖ Never let your child fall asleep or nap with a bottle filled with these liquids or a pacifier dipped in one.
- ❖ If your child needs something to comfort them between feeding or at bedtime, give them a bottle of cool water or a clean pacifier recommended by your dentist or pediatrician.
- ❖ Fluoride is needed for decay-resistant teeth. If your local water supply does not contain fluoride or not enough, then ask your dentist how your child should get the necessary amount of fluoride.
- ❖ Your child's first visit to the dentist should be around 12 months. It is always helpful to check your child's teeth and visit the dentist regularly. If you ever suspect anything is wrong with your child's teeth, visit the dentist as soon as possible.