

## **NURSING BOTTLE DECAY**

Many parents are surprised to learn that the nursing bottle can pose a very particular threat to young teeth. When teeth first come in, they are not yet perfectly hardened and are very susceptible to decay.

If the nursing bottle is left in an infant's mouth for a long period of time, particularly at bedtime, and if the bottle contains anything but plain water, rapid decay can occur. The amount of saliva produced decreases when a child is asleep. This allows these sugars to pool around the teeth. The mouth's bacteria use these sugars to create acids that damage teeth.

These fluids all contain sugars and should not be given to babies or children in a bottle to take to bed: breast milk, cow's milk, chocolate milk, formula, fruit juice, pop, powdered drink crystals. Do not use honey or sugar dipped pacifiers.

Sugars in these liquids turn to acid, which washes over the teeth and dissolves the enamel. The result can be serious decay that sometimes happens so quickly that parents believe the teeth "came in that way".

### ***What to look for:***

The first sign may be dull white spots or lines on the teeth, particularly on the tongue side. Dark or discoloured teeth may be the sign of a more serious problem. Your child's teeth should be checked for brown spots, which may mark the onset of tooth decay. Nursing bottle decay or early childhood caries can occur in children of up to four years of age. If you suspect your infant has nursing bottle decay, your child should see a dentist immediately. It must be treated quickly to prevent abscesses.

### ***What to do:***

If you currently give your child a nighttime bottle of anything but plain water, stopping all at once may be too upsetting for the child. First, substitute plain water for the milk or juice. Your child may fuss or cry until the new routine is established. Persevere. You will be saving your baby from discomfort and pain later on. Regular brushing should start with the first tooth but it is also a good idea to clean your child's gums with a washcloth after feeding even before the first tooth appears.

### ***Talk to your dentist:***

If you have any further questions please feel free to contact us at **905-508-2244**.