

ORAL CARE OF A BABY

Oral and dental health is a family matter. Parents can serve as a good example to children.

BREASTFEEDING AND SUCKING HABITS

- Breastfeeding has positive effects on the development of the child's occlusion and it can protect the child from malocclusions.
- Breast milk for a child under one year of age contains antidotes to dental caries bacteria.
- Breast milk alone does not cause tooth decay. Extended breastfeeding and frequent breastfeeding sessions, especially at night, may, however, expose to tooth decay, if the child's diet includes sugary products and an adequate intake of fluoride along with toothbrushing have not been taken care of.
- If the child uses a feeding bottle, you should start to decrease its use at the age of one year. The child should give up using the dummy by the age of two. Prolonged use of the dummy can cause jaw and tooth abnormalities, such as open bite. Sweet drinks ingested from the feeding bottle pose a high risk to tooth decay.

TEETHING

- The child will have 20 milk teeth, of which the first one teethes at the age of about 7 months. All milk teeth have been teethed at the age of about 3 years.
- At the teething stage, saliva secretion increases, and the gums may itch and be swollen. In addition, the child may be weepy and have some fever.
- Symptoms at this teething stage can be relieved by giving the child a teething ring cooled in the refrigerator. If necessary, the child can also be given paracetamol due to fever, in accordance with the instructions.

TRANSMISSION OF DENTAL CARIES BACTERIA

- There are no bacteria in the mouth of a newborn that cause cavities, but the bacteria are transmitted to the child usually by his/her loved ones via saliva. The transmission of dental caries can take place immediately after the child has had his/her first tooth teethed, for example via cutlery.
- Avoid kissing the child on the mouth, cleaning the dummy in your own mouth, tasting the food with the same spoon and cooling the food by blowing on it.
- Regular use of full xylitol by parents reduces the number of bacteria in the mouth and their risk of transmission to the child.
- The child can start using xylitol as soon as the chewing goes smoothly. Xylitol pastilles that are soluble in the mouth are recommended for children under two. Xylitol can cause some laxative symptoms; therefore the dosage is gradually increased.

TOOTHBRUSHING

- Toothbrushing will be started immediately after the first tooth has appeared.
- Teeth should be brushed twice a day with a toothpaste for children containing fluoride (the fluoride content 1000–1100 ppm, parts per million). Concerning children less than three years old, just a tiny amount or a small rice grits-sized amount of toothpaste is to be used on each brush. (Käypä hoito, the Current Care Guidelines 2020)