



DELAWARE MODERN PEDIATRICS, P. A.

David M. Epstein, M.D.

Tamar Hirschberg, RN, CPNP

Lorna Divino, RN, CPNP

300 Biddle Avenue, Suite 206
Springside Plaza, Connor Building

Newark, Delaware 19702

Phone: (302) 392-2077

Fax: (302) 392-0020

www.DMPKids.com

Cavity Prevention

Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease in children: it's 5 times more common than asthma. Brushing is important, of course. But there are many other things you can do to keep your kids cavity-free.

The big news is that the AAP now recommends that children see a dentist regularly, starting around the 1st birthday. ([You may see a list of local pediatric dentists on our website.](#))

Also, the bacteria that causes cavities is contagious. So if you have poor dental health, your children can "catch" cavities from you!

- Take good care of your own teeth, remember to floss, and be sure to visit a dentist yourself twice a year.
- Avoid spoon and cup sharing.
- Avoid cleaning the pacifier in your mouth.

Here are some preventative suggestions to reduce cavities:

- End the use of bottles by 15 months of age.
- Limit juice and other sweet drinks to 6 oz/day or less, even if diluted. (And, of course, limit soda!)
- Consider investing in electric toothbrushes for everybody in the house. ([See my blog about them on our website.](#))
- Avoid babies having a bottle in bed or "propping" bottles.
- Encourage fresh fruit and vegetables. The roughage helps cleanse the teeth and gums.
- Breastfed infants have been shown to have fewer cavities later.

Parents can start brushing teeth as soon as they erupt. Generally, I recommend no toothpaste, or non-fluoridated "kids" toothpaste, until the child is old enough to spit reliably. (Think of a child old enough to tie his shoes!) Flossing is recommended once the teeth have grown in enough to touch each other.

A few young children, considered to be at "high risk" of cavities, may benefit from using tiny amounts of fluoridated toothpaste. Use an amount in size similar to the child's pinkie fingernail.

Children considered at high risk for cavities include:

- Children with special health care needs
- Children of parents with cavities
- Children who already have tooth decay or damage
- Children who sleep with a bottle, or breastfeed throughout the night
- Children in families of low socioeconomic status

-- David M. Epstein MD