

# Early Childhood Tooth Decay

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What is early childhood tooth decay?**

Early childhood tooth decay is the rapid decay of many or all baby teeth. The teeth most likely to be damaged are the front teeth since they are the first teeth to erupt and have the longest exposure to “sugars” found in the bottle. The teeth appear brown, black or “rotten”.

### **What causes it to happen?**

Any liquid besides water can cause decay. Sipping a sugary drink or juice often throughout the day leads to many acid attacks. Allowing a baby to fall asleep with a bottle means the last mouthful of liquid is not swallowed. Instead, it mixes together with the bacteria in the baby’s mouth (plaque) and the teeth can decay.

### **Are the baby teeth that important?**

Primary teeth are very important. They hold the spaces open for the permanent teeth (to avoid crowding); they allow proper speech development; they allow for proper nutrition and growth and they provide a sense of self-esteem by giving your child a healthy smile.

### **What can I do?**

- If your child is going to bed with a bottle gradually weaken the milk with water.
- Frequently “lift the lip” to check for signs of decay.
- Visit your dentist. A fluoride varnish may help.
- The WRHA Dental Clinic is at Machray School at 940-2090.
- Always Hold Your Baby While Feeding!



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