



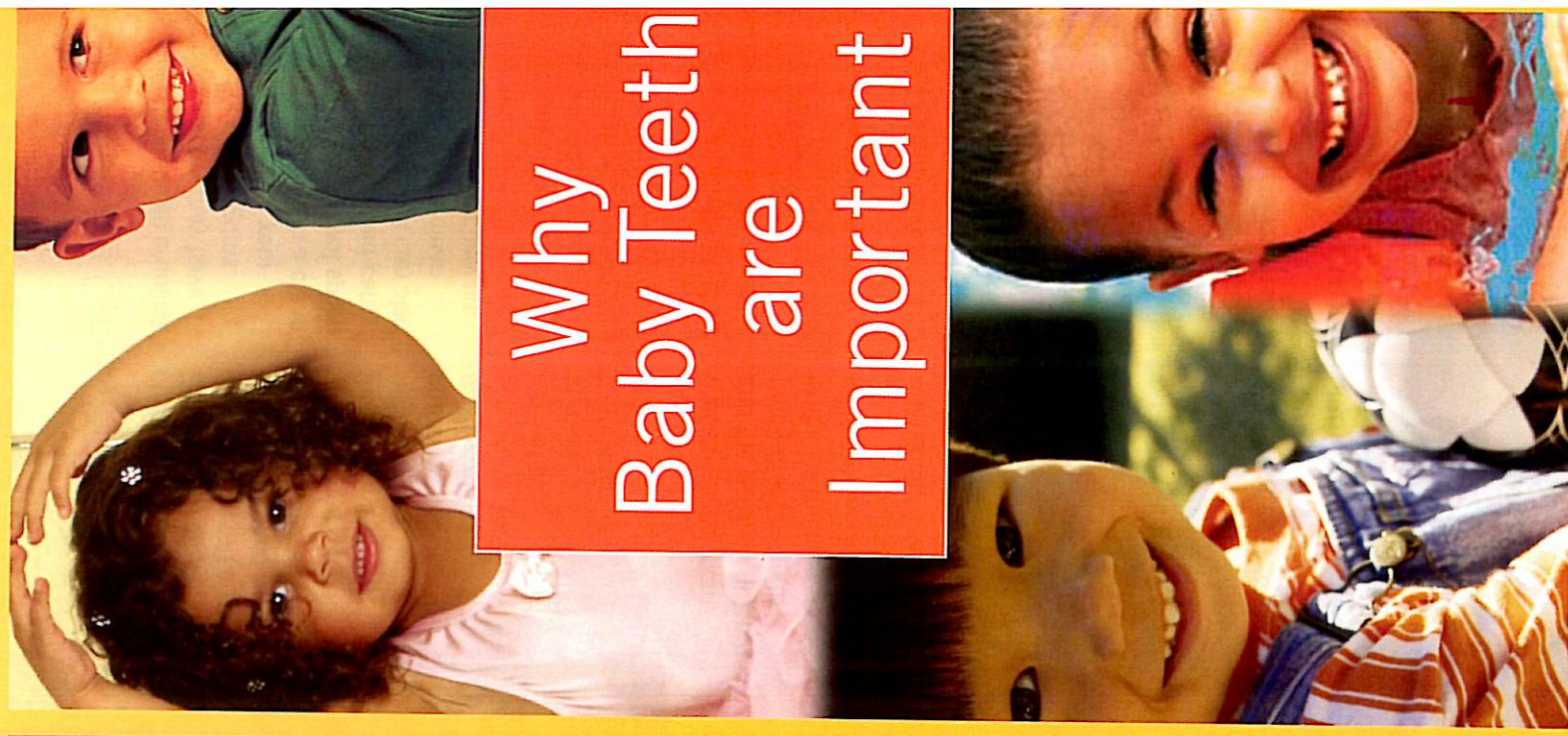
People usually think of a newborn baby as having no teeth. But the 20 primary teeth that will erupt in the next two and a half years are already present at birth in the baby's jawbones. At birth, most of the crowns of the primary teeth are almost complete, and the chewing surfaces of the permanent molars have begun forming.

Primary teeth are just as important as permanent teeth — for chewing, speaking, and appearance. In addition, the primary teeth hold the space in the jaws for the permanent teeth. Both primary and permanent teeth help give the face its shape and form.

**ADA American
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**Why
Baby Teeth
are
Important**



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The Teething Cycle

When teeth begin erupting, some babies may have sore or tender gums.

Gently rubbing your child's gums with a clean finger, a small, cool spoon or a wet gauze pad can be soothing. You can also give the baby a clean teething ring to chew on. If your child is still cranky and uncomfortable, consult your dentist or physician. Contrary to common belief, fever is not normal for a teething baby. If your infant has a fever while teething, call your physician.

A baby's front four teeth usually erupt first, beginning as early as six months after birth. Most

children have a full set of 20 primary teeth by the time they are three years old. As your child

grows, the jaws also grow, making room for the permanent teeth which will begin to erupt at about age six. At the same time, the roots of the primary teeth begin to be absorbed by the tissues around them, and the permanent teeth under them begin to erupt. By the time your child reaches age 21, all 32 of the permanent teeth will usually have erupted.



Preventing Decay of Primary Teeth

As soon as teeth appear in the mouth, decay can occur. One of the risk factors for early childhood caries (sometimes called baby bottle tooth decay) is frequent and prolonged exposure of a baby's teeth to liquids containing sugar, including milk, breast milk, formula and fruit juice. Tooth decay can occur when parents or caregivers put a baby to bed with a bottle — or use milk, formula or juice as a pacifier for a fussy baby.

Infants should finish their bedtime and naptime bottle before going to bed. If you use a pacifier, use a clean one. Never dip a pacifier in sugar or honey

before giving it to a baby. (Ask your child's physician or dentist to recommend a type of pacifier.)

The preschool years are an important time to help your child establish good eating habits. To help maintain a balanced diet for your child, select foods from the five main food groups — fruits, vegetables, meat, grains, and dairy. Try to limit between-meal snacks. If your child needs a snack, choose nutritious foods from the main food groups rather than offering cookies, candy and other sweets.

Keeping Your Child's Teeth Healthy

Begin cleaning the baby's mouth during the first few days after birth. After every feeding, wipe the baby's gums with a clean gauze pad. This removes plaque and residual food that can harm erupting teeth.

When your child's teeth begin to erupt, brush them gently with a child's size toothbrush and water. Brush the teeth of children over age two with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Be sure they spit out the toothpaste and rinse with water. (Consult with your child's dentist or physician if you are considering using fluoride toothpaste before age two.) When choosing a toothpaste for your child, check the manufacturer's label. Some toothpastes are not recommended for

children under age six. To clean your child's teeth, you can sit on a sofa with the child's head in your lap. Be sure you can see into the child's mouth easily. Use floss as soon as the child has two teeth that touch. The dentist or hygienist can demonstrate how to floss. When choosing oral hygiene products, look for those that carry the American Dental Association's Seal of Acceptance — a sign that a product has met ADA criteria for safety and effectiveness.



"Holding Space Open" for Permanent Teeth

Sometimes a primary tooth is lost before the permanent tooth beneath it is ready to erupt. If a primary tooth is lost too early, nearby teeth can tip or shift into the vacant space. When the permanent tooth is ready to emerge into the space, there may not be enough room for it. The new tooth may be unable to emerge — or may emerge in an abnormal position. The vacant space may also cause a permanent tooth to erupt prematurely.

If your child loses a tooth prematurely, the dentist may recommend a space

maintainer, a plastic or metal device that holds open the space left by the missing tooth. The dentist will remove this device once the permanent tooth begins to erupt.



As your child's first tooth erupts, consult with your child's dentist regarding scheduling your child's first visit. It is advantageous for the first dental visit to occur within six months after the first tooth erupts, but not later than the first birthday. Talk about the visit in a positive, matter-of-fact way, as you would any new experience. Explain that the dentist is a friendly doctor who helps you take good care of your teeth. And make sure your little one visits the dentist regularly to help keep teeth free of cavities.



**“Brush and floss.
Avoid too many snacks.
See your dentist regularly.”**

How many times have you heard that? Now there are even more reasons to heed that advice. Taking good care of your teeth and gums isn't just about preventing cavities or bad breath.

The mouth is a window into the health of the body. It can show signs of nutritional deficiencies or general infection. Systemic diseases — those that affect the entire body such as diabetes, AIDS and Sjögren's syndrome — may first become apparent because of mouth lesions or other oral problems.

The mouth is filled with countless bacteria, some linked to tooth decay and periodontal (gum) disease.

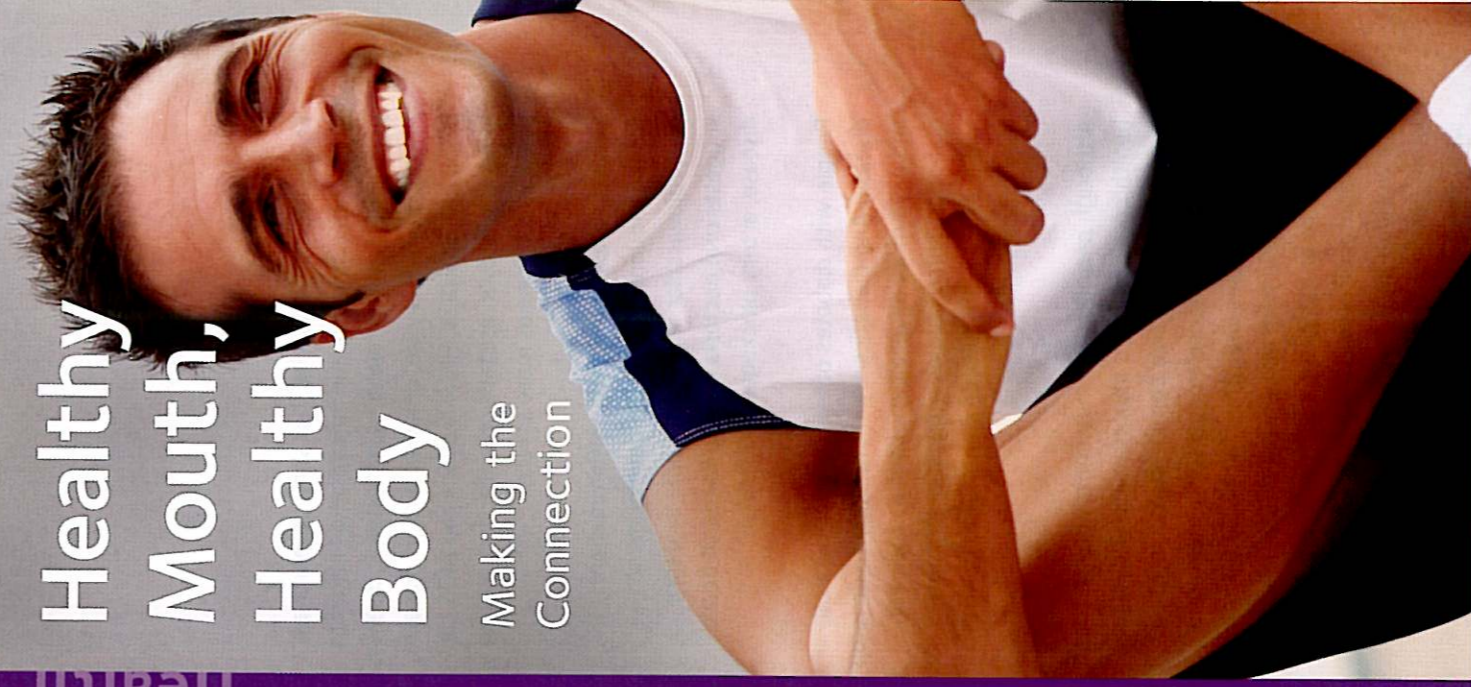
Accumulating scientific evidence suggests that periodontal, or gum, disease may be associated with a number of systemic disorders such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, stroke and adverse pregnancy outcomes. Pregnant women may be at increased risk for delivering pre-term and/or low birthweight babies. It is important to note, however, that an association between these systemic conditions and periodontal disease does not mean that one condition causes the other.

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Health

Healthy Mouth, Healthy Body

Making the
Connection



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Exploring possible links

More studies are needed, but some researchers suspect that bacteria and inflammation linked to periodontitis play a role in some systemic diseases or conditions. Likewise, diseases such as diabetes, blood cell disorders, HIV infections and AIDS can lower the body's resistance to infection, making periodontal diseases more severe.

Several studies link chronic inflammation from periodontitis with the development of cardiovascular problems. Some evidence suggests oral bacteria may be linked to heart disease, artery blockages and stroke.

People with diabetes often have periodontal disease. And diabetics are more likely to develop and have more severe periodontitis than non-diabetics. Some studies suggest periodontitis can make it more difficult for diabetics to control their blood sugar.

Although periodontitis may contribute to these health conditions, it's important to understand that just because two conditions occur at the same time doesn't necessarily mean one condition causes the other. What we do know is that people with diabetes and people who smoke are at increased risk for developing periodontal disease. That's why researchers are working hard, examining what happens when periodontitis is treated in individuals with these various health problems.

Periodontal diseases: What you should know

Periodontal disease is a chronic infection caused by bacteria. It begins when certain bacteria in plaque (the sticky, colorless film that constantly forms on the teeth and tissues in the mouth) produce toxins and enzymes that irritate the gums. This causes inflammation if plaque is not removed daily.

Plaque that remains on teeth can irritate the gums, making them red, tender and likely to bleed. This condition, called gingivitis, can lead to more serious types of periodontal disease. Gingivitis can be reversed and gums kept healthy by removing plaque every day with a good oral hygiene routine and by having your teeth professionally cleaned.

But if gingivitis is allowed to persist, it can progress to periodontitis, a chronic infection in the pockets around the teeth. The resulting inflammation, which may be painless, can damage the attachment of the gums and bone to the teeth. At this stage, treatment by a dentist is needed. Left untreated, teeth may eventually become loose, fall out or require removal by a dentist.



Healthy Gums



Gingivitis



Periodontitis

If you notice any of these signs, see your dentist:

- gums that bleed during brushing and flossing
- red, swollen or tender gums
- gums that have pulled away from your teeth
- persistent bad breath
- pus between your teeth and gums
- loose or separating teeth
- a change in the way your teeth fit together when you bite
- a change in the fit of partial dentures

What you can do

Given the potential link between periodontitis and systemic health problems, prevention may be an important step in maintaining overall health.

- **Brush your teeth thoroughly twice a day.** Clean between your teeth with floss or another type of interdental cleaner once a day. You may consider or your dentist may recommend using an anti-microbial mouth rinse as part of your daily oral hygiene routine.
- **Choose dental products with the American Dental Association's Seal of Acceptance,** an important symbol of a dental product's safety and effectiveness. The ADA Seal represents extensive clinical and laboratory research for the dental products upon which it appears. The ADA Seal assures you that the product is not only safe but it does what it claims to do.



- **Eat a balanced diet and limit snacks,** which may reduce your risk of tooth decay and gum disease.
- **Schedule regular dental checkups.** Professional cleanings are the only way to remove tartar (calculus), which traps plaque bacteria along the gum line.
- **Tell your dentist about changes in your overall health,** particularly any recent illnesses or chronic conditions. Provide an updated health history including medication use – both prescription and non-prescription products. If you use tobacco, talk to your dentist about options for quitting.
- **If you are pregnant or thinking about becoming pregnant, pay particular attention to your teeth and gums.** That's because pregnancy — and the changing hormone levels that occur with it — can exaggerate some dental problems. Taking good care of your oral health is important for you and your baby.

For more information on oral health matters, visit www.ada.org.