

## Breastfeeding and Dental Health

### Websites and Resources

[www.bcdha.com](http://www.bcdha.com)

British Columbia Dental Hygienist Association:  
Dental Health Information-Tips for Parents

[www.la lecheleague.org/NB/NBdental.html](http://www.la lecheleague.org/NB/NBdental.html)

La Leche League articles on Breastfeeding  
and Dental Health

[www.brianpalmerdds.com](http://www.brianpalmerdds.com)

Dr. Brian Palmer's website on Breastfeeding and Dental  
Health, Sleep Apnea, and Tongue Tie

JADA, Vol.130, December 1999, p 1787-1792 *Streptococcus  
Mutans, Early Childhood Caries and New Opportunities* Harold, C.  
Slavkin, DDS

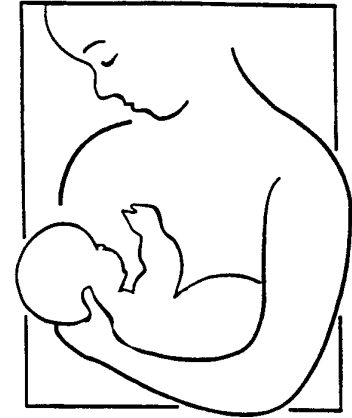
“Population-based studies do not support a definitive link  
between prolonged breast-feeding and caries”

This pamphlet is adapted from British Columbia community health dental programs by  
the World Breastfeeding Week subcommittee of the BC Baby-Friendly Network.  
[www.bcbabyfriendly.ca](http://www.bcbabyfriendly.ca)

## Breastfeeding & Healthy Teeth

Breastfeeding promotes good  
jaw development and reduces  
the risk of orthodontic problems  
and many other illnesses.

Health Canada recommends  
exclusive breastfeeding for the  
first 6 months and continued  
breastfeeding for up to two years  
and beyond. <sup>1</sup>



When teeth first come in, they are not yet fully hardened and  
can easily decay. Early childhood tooth decay occurs when  
a child's teeth are in **frequent** contact with any liquid other  
than water, particularly if the teeth haven't been brushed  
(there is plaque on the teeth).

All milk, even your breastmilk, contains sugar (lactose). If  
your child feeds frequently or continuously at night after  
some teeth are in, decay may occur. <sup>2</sup>

More children are hospitalised in British Columbia for  
dental treatment than for any other reason. Dental decay,  
even in baby teeth, is expensive, can cause pain, interfere  
with learning and health, and may require general  
anaesthetic. Dental decay is preventable. <sup>3</sup>

## Here are some ideas on keeping your baby's teeth healthy



- ▶ When front teeth appear use a smear of fluoride toothpaste on a toothbrush and clean twice every day.
- ▶ Be sure to clean teeth before bedtime.
- ▶ Once any teeth are in, avoid letting baby sleep for long periods with the breast in his or her mouth.
- ▶ Get advice on preventing cavities early.
- ▶ The Canadian Dental Association recommends that babies have a dental visit beginning about one year of age, or within 6 months of eruption of the first tooth.
- ▶ Lift your baby's lip once a month to check teeth at the gumline.
- ▶ If you are concerned about the colour or appearance of your child's teeth call your dentist immediately.
- ▶ Avoid feeding your baby sweetened drinks and foods. Limit use of juice, it may not be needed if plenty of vegetables and fruits are eaten. Juice does not contain the fibre found in fruits and vegetables.<sup>4</sup>
- ▶ After solids are started, around 6 months, teach baby to drink water from a cup.
- ▶ Ensure your own teeth are well cared for. Decay causing bacteria can be passed from parent to child.<sup>5</sup>

Breastmilk alone has a low potential for causing decay. Once other foods are added to the diet the decay potential is much greater.

### Relative Decay Potential Of Some Liquids<sup>6</sup>

Liquid	Relative Decay Potential
water	0.00
Human Breastmilk alone	0.01
Human Breastmilk with 10% sucrose solution	1.30
ProSobee formula	1.11
Isomil formula	0.79
Apple juice	0.80
Grape juice	0.74
Soda pop	1.05

### References:

1. [www.healthcanada.ca/nutrition](http://www.healthcanada.ca/nutrition) Revised Recommendations for Breastfed Infants, Health Canada 2004
2. Community Dentistry and Oral Epidemiology 1994; 22: 289-293 *Nursing caries, linear hypoplasia and nursing and weaning habits in Tanzanian infants*, Matee et al.
3. A report on the Health of British Columbians, Provincial Health Officer's Annual Report 1997, Feature Report: The Health and Well-being of British Columbia's Children.
4. American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Nutrition fruit juice policy statement. PEDIATRICS Vol 107 No.5 May 2001, pp1210-1213. [www.aap.org/policy/re0047.html](http://www.aap.org/policy/re0047.html)
5. Journal of the Canadian Dental Association 2003 Vol.69 No.5 *Causes, Treatment and Prevention of Early Childhood Caries: A Microbiologic Perspective* Berkowitz J.
6. Pediatr Dent; 21(2)86-90 1999 *Investigation of the role of human breastmilk in caries development* Erikson & Mazhari