Mouth Care for Infants and Toddlers
Birth to 36 months

Baby teeth are needed for:
- Eating/Chewing
- Talking/Speech
- Smiling/Appearance
- Healthy adult teeth

Birth to 12 months

Start healthy habits early to prevent tooth decay
- Keep your own mouth healthy and clean to prevent spreading tooth decay to baby.
- Wipe baby’s gums daily with a moist cloth before teeth come in.
- Do not put anything sweet on pacifiers/soothers.
- If bottle feeding, never allow your child to sleep with a bottle.
- Teach children to drink from a cup starting at 6 to 9 months.

When baby teeth start to appear
- Brush the teeth two times a day.
- Use a small, soft toothbrush.
- Use a rice grain size amount of fluoride toothpaste to make teeth stronger and prevent tooth decay.

If brushing is difficult ask another adult to help.

Teething:
- May make baby or young child fussy.
- Rubbing the gums with a wet facecloth or letting your child chew on a clean, cool teething ring are good choices for teething.
- Teething biscuits, crackers or cookies may cause tooth decay.
- Check with a health professional before using teething gels, ointments or tablets.
- If baby has a fever or diarrhea when teething contact your family health providers or HealthLink BC Dial 8-1-1.

Take your child to see the dentist by 12 months.
Healthy eating habits for healthy teeth

- Serve 3 meals and 2 to 3 planned healthy snacks a day.
- Offer a variety of healthy foods from all 4 food groups for meals and snacks.
- Offer all drinks from a cup.
- Offer only water between meals and snacks.

Sipping drinks and eating snacks all day long may cause tooth decay.

See "Feeding your Toddler 1 to 3 years" online at http://vch.eduhealth.ca for more information.

Adults need to brush the child’s teeth twice a day

- Make sure you see into the mouth when brushing.
- Brush where the teeth and gums meet.
- Brush all sides of the teeth and be sure to reach the back teeth.
- Keep using a rice grain size amount of fluoride toothpaste at this age.
- Do not give up! Brushing can be difficult.

Other fact sheets on parenting your child are available at your local Community Health Office/Centre or online at http://vch.eduhealth.ca

For more information:

- HealthLink BC - Dial 8-1-1. Translation services are available in 130 languages. www.healthlinkbc.ca
- or the Public Health Dental Program or a Public Health Nurse at Vancouver Coastal Health. www.vch.ca
- VCH Parenting Website - http://parenting.vch.ca/
- For a video on how to brush, see www.vch.ca/dental-health-children, ‘Tooth Brushing for children three and under – The knee-to-knee technique’

Most children have all 20 baby teeth by the time they are 3 years old. Some baby teeth will not fall out until about age 12. Problems with baby teeth may lead to problems with adult teeth.