



“If my child gets a cavity in a baby tooth, should it be filled?”

Many parents have heard the *myth* that tooth decay in “baby teeth” should be ignored. This false story emphasizes that baby teeth are temporary and they are going to fall out anyway. *However, parents should understand that nothing could be farther from the truth!*

“How do cavities form in the first place?”

Four things are necessary for cavities to form: a tooth, bacteria, sugars or other carbohydrates, and time. Dental plaque is a thin, sticky, colorless deposit of bacteria and left over food that constantly forms on everyone’s teeth. When you eat, the sugars in your food cause the bacteria in plaque to produce acids that attack the tooth enamel. With improper brushing and flossing, time, and repeated acid attacks the enamel breaks down and a cavity forms.

“Why don’t you just pull it?”

This is a question often heard from parents when a child has a cavity. Sometimes removing the tooth is the best option. However, there are several important reasons to save baby teeth that have cavities:



Space loss for the erupting permanent tooth

1) To Keep Space for adult teeth to emerge

Baby teeth help the growth of the bone and preserve the space for the permanent teeth underneath to emerge properly. Some baby teeth are necessary until a child is 12 years old or even longer! Premature loss of baby teeth can increase the chances that your child’s permanent teeth will not emerge in proper alignment. In the event of a missing permanent tooth, the baby tooth may be maintained well into adulthood.

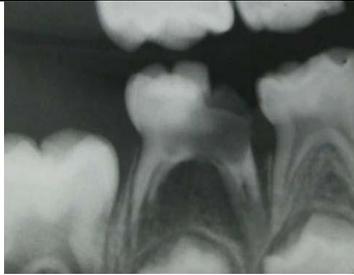


Loss of teeth compromises eating ability

2) To Have Natural Chewing and Clear Speech

Maintaining baby teeth ensures that your child will be able to handle solid foods effectively. Having healthy teeth also enhances your child’s confidence, comfort, and ability to pronounce words properly.





Infection from a baby tooth spreads in the bone

3) To Avoid a Painful Infection

Tooth decay is really an infection that can spread from one tooth to another tooth. This results in more cavities on baby teeth and the spread of decay to permanent teeth. It is essential to restore decayed baby teeth to prevent infection from extending into the surrounding bone and damage to developing permanent teeth. If dental cavities are not treated promptly, your child might suffer a great deal of pain or even develop a mouth or facial infection, which can be very serious for his or her health. An infection can negatively influence your child's ability to eat, to sleep, and to concentrate at school. The pain will affect their mood and general health. If you suspect a cavity in your child's mouth, please call one of PDG's office locations in Vancouver, Richmond, Delta, and Coquitlam to have one of our certified specialists in pediatric dentistry assess the area of concern.

“How can I prevent cavities on my child?”

Proper care of baby teeth is instrumental in enhancing the health of your child. Assist or supervise your child's twice-a-day brushing and bed-time flossing until he or she has the dexterity to do so on his or her own. In order to determine if a specific cavity needs to be filled, have your pediatric dentist at PDG examine the area so all factors associated with your child's growth and development, as well as the severity of the cavity in the tooth, may be considered. It is best to have your child seen by PDG's pediatric dental specialists by 1 year of age, and to maintain regular 6-month checkups to be informed about your child's oral health.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!

