



Sedgwick County...  
working for you

## *Nursing/Baby Bottle Tooth Decay*

### *Nursing/Baby Bottle Tooth Decay - What is it?*

Nursing/baby bottle tooth decay is a dental condition that can destroy the teeth of an infant or a young child. The upper front teeth are the most susceptible to damage, but other teeth may also be affected.

Nursing/baby bottle tooth decay is a serious problem that is caused by putting your baby to bed while nursing or with a bottle or letting the baby carry a bottle in its mouth during the day. Many times bottles are used as pacifiers to keep children quiet, but this is not healthy for the baby.

The sugar in the milk, formula, juice or other common drinks for babies, causes severe tooth decay (cavities).

### *How Serious is Nursing/Baby Bottle Tooth Decay?*

Nursing/baby bottle tooth decay can cause painful toothaches that may make it hard to eat. Severely decayed teeth can become infected and may need to be extracted.

If your child's teeth are lost too early due to nursing/baby bottle tooth decay, your child may have some of these problems:

- Poor eating habits
- Speech problems
- Crooked teeth
- Damaged adult (permanent) teeth
- Yellow or brown teeth (baby or permanent)

### *For more information*

Visit the Sedgwick County  
Health Department Web page at  
[www.sedgwickcounty.org](http://www.sedgwickcounty.org)  
or call 660-7300.

### *How can I prevent Nursing/Baby Bottle Tooth Decay?*

Here are a few precautions parents can take to reduce nursing/baby bottle tooth decay.

- After each feeding wipe the child's teeth and gums with a damp washcloth or a small soft toothbrush to remove plaque.
- Begin brushing your child's teeth as soon as the first tooth erupts.
- Floss your child's teeth as soon as the teeth begin to touch.
- Start dental visits between six and twelve months of age.
- Never allow your child to fall asleep nursing or with a bottle containing a sweetened liquid. If your child refuses to fall asleep without a bottle, simply fill it with water and nothing else.

### *Tips For Parents To Remember*

- Limit bottle feeding to mealtimes only.
- Do not allow your baby to nurse at will during the night.
- Clean baby's mouth after feeding.
- Avoid feeding your baby sweets.
- Start using a cup when baby sits up (5-7 months).
- By 12 months your child should be drinking from a cup (no bottles)
- Take your baby for a dental check by 12 months.

### *Instead of A Bottle*

Instead of a bottle, there are many other ways to quiet and calm him/her:

- Hold or rock the baby
- Give the baby a special blanket or stuffed toy.
- Use a pacifier
- Rub the baby's back or head
- Sing and talk to the baby
- Play soft music or a windup toy near the baby's bed.