



Dental Resource Center  
2138 Madison Avenue  
Toledo, Ohio 43604  
419-241-8180

## Changes in Mouth / Teeth

One of the most important bacteria in dental cavities is streptococcus mutans (SM). SM does not appear in the oral cavity of infants until after tooth eruption. SM itself does not adhere to the teeth very well. It requires other plaque forming bacteria for initial growth. Most likely, infants become infected through close contact with parents, siblings, or other individuals. Usually the mother is considered to be the source. Infants whose mothers harbor the very high levels of SM (mothers that have a very high cavity rate) become colonized more readily than infants of mothers with low SM levels in their saliva. A minimum infected dose is necessary to develop cavities. Disease prevention should include dental therapy for the parents as well. A common comment heard is "We all have bad teeth." This may actually mean – we all have the same bacteria. Research shows that decay causing bacteria can be spread from parent to child as early as 10 months of age.

Watch for changes in the mouth by checking your baby's teeth for brown spots or bright white spots along the gums. Second, determine if the teeth are sensitive to sweets, cold, or hot foods.

It is very important to maintain the health of your child's primary teeth (baby teeth). Neglected cavities frequently lead to problems that affect developing permanent teeth. Primary teeth, or baby teeth, are important for proper chewing. They also provide space for the permanent teeth, guide permanent teeth into correct position, and permit normal development of the jawbones and muscles. Primary teeth also affect the development of speech and add to an attractive appearance. While the front four teeth typically last until six or seven years of age, the back teeth are not replaced until your child reaches adolescence.