

World Breastfeeding Week 2020.

The Dental Health Foundation supports the WHO Statement that *'Breastfeeding provides every child with the best possible start in life. It delivers health, nutritional and emotional benefits to both children and mothers. And it forms part of a sustainable food system. But while breastfeeding is a natural process, it is not always easy. Mothers need support – both to get started and to sustain breastfeeding'*.

Mothers are encouraged and supported in breast-feeding and may choose to continue to breast-feed as the weaning diet becomes increasingly varied.

Breast milk is the best form of nourishment for young infants and it protects your baby from infections and diseases, as well as building a strong emotional bond between you and your baby. Breastfeed or give breastmilk, formula or cooled boiled tap water in your baby's bottle, but don't let them sleep with a bottle in its mouth. If it is not possible to breast feed, a suitable iron-fortified infant formula should be used.

For children allergic to cow's milk, check with your Doctor or PHN for a recommended alternative. Soya-based infant formula is not generally recommended for babies under 6 months of age. Some soy milks contain sugar and can cause tooth decay if children are allowed drink it on demand throughout the day from a feeding bottle, so choose plain unsweetened. Cow's milk, rice milk or sheep's milk are not suitable for children under the age of 1. For older children, cow's milk is a good source of calcium which is necessary for the development of teeth and bones.

Tooth Tips for Breast Feeding

Exclusive breastfeeding reduces the risk of early childhood caries or baby bottle decay. This type of tooth decay often occurs when a baby is put to bed with a bottle – even ones containing formula, milk or fruit juice, resulting in the frequent, prolonged exposure of the baby's teeth to drinks that contain sugar. However, natural, breast milk, just like formula, contains sugar so it is still important whether, breastfed or bottle-fed, to care for your baby's teeth from the start. A few days after birth, begin wiping your baby's gums with a clean damp cloth to clean your baby's gums after a feed. When the first tooth appears brush twice a day with a soft toothbrush and water. **Do not use toothpaste at this age, unless advised by your dentist.**

Taking care of your baby's mouth from birth is a good habit which will set them up with a healthy mouth, teeth and gums for their lifetime.

Check <https://www.dentalhealth.ie/your-oral-health/infants/tooth-tips-for-0-2-year-olds/> for further information on diet tips for 0-2 year olds.