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Sippy Cup Causing Too Many Cavities

(including information from MSNBC Health News and the Wall Street Journal 2002)

Get Infants to the Dentist by First Birthday

March 22, 2002: Toddlers love their sippy cups, but those cups (as convenient as they are) are causing far too many cavities, say the nation's dentists. Toddlers are literally dousing their teeth all day long with sugary drinks, and parents rarely think to take very young children to the dentist.

Nearly one-third of toddlers with tooth decay problems used sippy cups, according to the study published in the *Journal of Dentistry for Children*.

"While these findings are not surprising, the connection between baby bottle tooth decay and sippy cups is very new, yet very logical," says Cindi Sherwood, DDS, spokeswoman for the Academy of General Dentistry, in their newsletter.

Sippy sups were developed for children who have outgrown bottles and are too young to manage a full-size cup on their own. Sippy cups are much like sucking a baby bottle with one exception. When toddlers drink from sippy cups, they immerse the six upper front teeth. If there's something sweet in the cup (and there frequently is) those teeth are literally bathed in sweet stuff all day long.

Sippy cups should be used only as a transitional step for children, not a long-term solution, according to the Academy.

"If left untreated, baby bottle tooth decay can result in pain and infection," says Sherwood. "Baby teeth are important because they hold the place for permanent teeth and help guide them into correct position. Several decayed teeth may need to be extracted which could affect the development of permanent teeth.

In fact, parents should get their children involved with a dentist much earlier than most do, according to the Academy. On average, children have their first dental visits at age 3. Dental experts recommend that initial visits occur between the ages of 6 months and 1 year, when the first tooth appears.