

after a year,
it's time to use those bottles
for something else



Extended
bottlefeeding
can damage
your child's
smile.

LYNN'S STORY: "this can't be happening to my daughter."



Lynn, with daughter Megan

"I'm the mother of six children. Over the years, I've seen pictures of children's teeth black with decay and wondered what kind of mother would allow that to happen to her child. Last week I took my three-year-old daughter, Megan, to the dentist and learned that I was that kind of mother! Juice had stripped the enamel from five of her teeth. Her beautiful smile is now spoiled with ugly silver caps.

My first reaction was, "Oh, my. How did that happen? This can't be happening to my daughter." I was hysterical at the dentist's office and cried for two days.

I wondered how this would change Megan's life. Would she be shy, afraid of smiling at others because of her teeth? Would her sweet personality change? Would she hide from others in her embarrassment? I wondered what I could have done differently — and then I cried again.

Megan was almost two when her brother was born. Giving her a bottle filled with juice allowed me time to juggle both children. And she loved juice! I knew it wasn't good for her, but I didn't think too much about it. After all, nothing had happened to my older children. And it was easier to give in to her whining and screaming than to say, "No more juice." Now I'm paying the price for those few quiet moments — and so is Megan. I wish I had remained strong.

I love Megan. I will do whatever it takes to get through this. I'm giving her water now when she's thirsty. But plain water can't compete with juice — yet. I make it fun by adding ice, offering it in a fun cup, and adding a straw. And no soda. It's milk at meals — even when eating out.

Not a day goes by that I don't look at Megan's smile and think about what happened. I tell everyone what I learned the hard way: little actions over time make a big difference. And yes, it can happen to you."

LYNN'S LIST: how to protect your child's smile

- Eliminate a bottlefeeding every few days. Do it slowly.
- Don't let your child take the bottle to bed, crawl with it, or walk with it.
- Always hold your child when giving them a bottle.
- Offer a cup with meals.
- Gradually offer more in the cup and less in the bottle.
- Keep sweetened liquids like juice and soda out of bottles.
- If your child won't go to sleep without a bottle, fill it with water.
- Offer water instead of juice.
- Wipe your child's teeth with a wet cloth or small toothbrush after meals.
- Help your child brush their teeth at least until they can tie their shoes.

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