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ORANGE COUNTY

parenting

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ONE COURAGEOUS OC KID

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BAD PARENTING, NOT
HOLLYWOOD, TO BLAME

+10

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Baby Teeth Care

Q
Infant

I've heard of something called "baby-bottle tooth decay," and I'm wondering if my son is susceptible to this. I've been nursing him to bed since he was born (he's almost 20 months old now). I just started noticing some black spots on his molars. Could those be cavities?

A

"Baby-bottle tooth decay," also known as "Nursing Caries," is caused when a baby's teeth are exposed for long periods of time to sugary liquids. The source of sugar can be mother's milk, formula, juices, cows' milk and other drinks containing sugar.

When the teeth are not cleaned after feeding, bacteria that normally live in the mouth feed on the sugar and produce an acid that cause the teeth to breakdown and form cavities. Teeth can deteriorate rapidly if the child is put to sleep with a bottle filled with sugary liquids. Liquid can pool around the front and back teeth, making them susceptible to the bacteria's acid attack.

These exposed teeth will over time form "white spots" on the enamel, or decalcified areas where the calcium is leached out. If not detected early, these oft-missed, innocent "white spots" can breakdown and form cavities, which can appear as brown or black spots. Some cavities that form in-between teeth are hard to detect without x-rays or a trained eye. If you suspect that your child has a cavity, make an appointment with your general dentist, or a pediatric dentist, for an exam.

The best way to avoid "Nursing Caries" is prevention! After nursing, even if your child doesn't have any teeth yet, gently wipe the gums and cheek with a soft, wet washcloth. It's ideal to clean the teeth at least twice daily, first thing in the morning and after the last feeding. When the first tooth appears, you can begin using a soft, infant toothbrush with a small amount of safe-to-swallow, non-fluoride toothpaste. A good rule of thumb is to use just enough to color the bristles, even a pea-size is too much for an infant!

You should continue to use the non-fluoride toothpaste until your child is able to spit, usually age 3 or 4. It's also important to begin flossing your child's teeth in areas where teeth touch. Parents often forget that even babies need to be flossed!

Most importantly, find your child a dental home, a place where your child is comfortable and can thrive in health. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry both recommend that every child be seen by a dentist by age one, or 6 months after the appearance of the first tooth. It's never too early to start good habits that will benefit your child with a bright and healthy future!

—Dr. Dora Lee

Raising a Beautiful Child

Q
All Ages

Parents know that encouraging a child with positive words is a good thing. But can too much praise be bad? Since my daughter was a toddler, she has been told she's "pretty," "beautiful" and "gorgeous." But I wonder if people telling her constantly how pretty she is might actually be negative. I don't want her to grow up thinking looks are everything. How should I approach this?

A

As our culture continues to be obsessed with "looking good" and assigning value to appearance, children at an early age are falling prey to these messages. Many young children assign "appearance words" to their faces and bodies as a result of this trend, instead of focusing on their personal qualities or skills. Phrases like "I'm fat" or "I'm ugly" are now being heard in their elementary school years.

Children who are constantly praised for their physical appearance with "You're gorgeous" or "You're a real beauty" are more likely to feel pressure to have and/or maintain the qualities for which they are being



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praised. This can lead children to become dependent on others for their looks, resulting in a struggle with feelings of failure and inadequacy when they don't feel like the prettiest or best dressed.

Your child's physical appearance is just one of the components that make up a healthy self-esteem. Self-esteem is the belief we have in ourselves that includes self-acceptance, self-worth and feeling competent. As your daughter's world is expanding due to the influence of others, it is the inner picture of whom she believes she is.

There are three components of child's self esteem. To create balance, include these areas when praising a child:

The physical aspect of self-esteem involves your child's physical appearance as well as how your child's body performs in situations like sports, hobbies, music and/or dance.

The social aspect of self-esteem involves how your child develops and maintains relationships that include family, peers, teachers, coaches and acquaintances.

The thinking aspect of self-esteem involves what your child knows through learning and problem solving.

When praise is genuine and includes these components, your child can feel beautiful, smart, kind, talented and helpful at the same time. Together, these create her core belief system.

As a parent, you have great influence on your child's self esteem and can nurture it positively:

- In front of your child, praise someone for their positive qualities and encourage her to do the same.
- If your child does makes a negative comment, encourage her to make a positive comment as well.
- Point out the physical skills your child does well or is trying to learn as well her appearance.
- Talk about the positive qualities and personal values your child has and/or displays toward others.

I trust these suggestions will help, but if you believe you and your family need additional advice, I recommend seeking a Marriage and Family Therapist. To locate a California Licensed Therapist, visit www.TherapistFinder.com. —Sherry Helgoe

Finicky Eaters



My son used to love eating green vegetables—broccoli, spinach, peas, green beans. But now he won't even touch them! How do I get him to eat his veggies? Add more spices? Puree them in meals? And how important is it for a young child to eat vegetables?



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