

# Definition of Early Childhood Caries (ECC)

Originating Council  
Council on Clinical Affairs

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Early childhood caries (ECC) is the presence of 1 or more decayed (noncavitated or cavitated lesions), missing (due to caries), or filled tooth surfaces in any primary tooth in a child 71 months of age or younger. In children younger than 3 years of age, any sign of smooth-surface caries is indicative

of severe early childhood caries (S-ECC). From ages 3 through 5, 1 or more cavitated, missing (due to caries), or filled smooth surfaces in primary maxillary anterior teeth, or a decayed, missing, or filled score of  $\geq 4$  (age 3),  $\geq 5$  (age 4), or  $\geq 6$  (age 5) surfaces constitutes S-ECC.

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