

# LIFETIME SMILES BEGIN EARLY



## TIPS FOR HEALTHY TEETH

### 6 MONTHS TO 12 MONTHS

**Baby teeth are important.** Tooth decay in baby teeth can be painful and can cause health problems like infections. A clean and germ-free mouth is a healthy place for teeth to grow. Your baby will get his first tooth around 6 months of age.

- \* **Brush your baby's teeth daily.** Continue to clean your baby's teeth after feeding. Once a tooth comes in, brush your baby's teeth twice a day with a soft bristled toothbrush, with no toothpaste. The best times to brush are before bed and after breakfast. Try putting your baby's head in your lap to make it easier to brush his or her teeth.
- \* **Put your baby to bed with hugs and love, not a bottle.** Sleeping with a bottle of formula or juice or other sweetened liquid is a leading cause of cavities in young children. Consider giving your baby a pacifier instead of a bottle when putting him or her to bed.
- \* **Put only breast milk, formula or plain water in your baby's bottle.** Sweet drinks like Gatorade, Kool-Aid and soda pop have sugar that causes cavities and should not be put in the bottle.
- \* **Lift the lip and look.** Babies change quickly. Every month, lift your baby's lip and check every tooth for the first signs of cavities. If you see white or brown spots on the teeth or anything unusual, contact your baby's dentist or physician.
- \* **Ask your doctor or nurse if your baby needs fluoride varnish.** Fluoride varnish is a protective coating that is painted on teeth to help prevent new cavities and help stop cavities that have already started.
- \* **First visit by first birthday** – When your baby turns 1 year old, schedule his or her first dental checkup. If you do not have a dentist, ask your physician to check your baby's teeth for early signs of cavities.



For more information, contact:  
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NORTH DAKOTA  
DEPARTMENT of HEALTH

Adapted with permission from materials funded by the First 5 Children and Families Commission of San Luis Obispo County, Calif.