

# Does your newborn need dental care?

Short Answer: **Yes.**



Did you know more than 40 percent of children have tooth decay by the time they reach kindergarten? And not only that, children who have cavities in their baby teeth are at a much greater risk for cavities in their adult teeth. But don't worry. Tooth decay is largely preventable by starting dental care early for your newborn.

## How soon should you start?

As soon as possible! It may seem silly to think about your newborn's dental health – you know, since they don't have any teeth yet. But it's important to start taking care of their dental health right after they're born. That way they can sprout healthy baby teeth, and eventually healthy adult teeth.

## Here are a few ways you can care for your newborn's mouth and teeth:

- **Avoid putting your baby to nap or bed with a bottle.** Milk, baby formula, juices and other sweet drinks all have sugar in them. This means sucking on a bottle filled with these liquids for long periods of time can lead to tooth decay.
- **Wipe their gums twice a day with a clean cloth.** Try to do this in the morning, after they eat, and at night before they go to bed. This helps to get rid of any bacteria or sugar in their mouth, both of which can cause cavities.
- **Once their first tooth comes in, start gently brushing their teeth twice a day.** Be sure to use only a very small amount of toothpaste with fluoride.
- **Take them to their scheduled Well-Child visits.** During Well-Child visits, your pediatrician will check your child's gums and teeth. They may suggest fluoride varnish for your child, which can help prevent cavities. If your doctor didn't apply fluoride varnish, ask them about it.
- **Take your baby to the dentist by their first birthday.** Along with brushing your teeth, routine (or regular) dental care is one of the best ways to keep your child's teeth healthy. As a Medicaid recipient, you can go to any dentist in Virginia through the Smiles for Children program.

If you need help finding a dentist for your child, call Smiles for Children at:  
**1-888-912-3456.**

For more information on dental health, call your Virginia Premier Coordinator at 1-800-727-7536.

Sources:  
Healthy Children [healthychildren.org](http://healthychildren.org)  
American Academy of Pediatrics [aapd.org](http://aapd.org)

