

Bright Smile for a Bright Future: Oral Health for California's Children



DID YOU KNOW?

SYSTEMIC RACISM AND ORAL HEALTH

Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease in children, with the greatest burden of oral health issues falling on historically marginalized communities of color and immigrant families. Inequities by race, ethnicity and socioeconomic disadvantage for tooth decay and untreated decay are profound. Poverty, food insecurity and lack of access to critical resources like dental care and health coverage are all factors that contribute to oral health inequities impacting children of color.



By third grade, **more than half** of California's children (61 percent) have experienced **tooth decay**.



Latinx children have the highest prevalence of tooth decay, with more than **72 percent** having experienced some form of **tooth decay** compared to 40 percent of white children in California.



Black children have the highest prevalence of untreated decay 26 percent - almost twice the rate of white children.



Children whose parents speak **Spanish as their first language** were more likely to have **tooth decay** and **untreated decay** compared to children whose parents speak **English as their first language**.



Children in **migrant programs** experience tooth decay at higher rates than children who are not in migrant programs.



Less than 75 percent of **disadvantaged children** experienced **caries**, compared to less than 50 percent of children who were **not disadvantaged**.



Socioeconomically disadvantaged* children have almost **twice the rate of tooth decay and untreated tooth decay**, compared to children who are not socioeconomically disadvantaged.



Latinx and Black children also have the lowest rates of accessing dental sealants - a protective coating that helps keep cavities from forming in the first place.

*Socioeconomically disadvantaged children are children who are eligible for the National School Lunch Program, children of agricultural workers, children in the foster care system, children experiencing homelessness, or children who have parents who did not receive a high school diploma.

WHY ORAL HEALTH MATTERS



Oral health problems can make it hard for children to **concentrate** in school, leading to low grades or even missed school days.



Taking care of your child's mouth and teeth will help them become a **healthy adult**.



Poor oral health leads to **tooth decay**, causing pain, infection and tooth loss.



The **pain and discomfort** of tooth decay make it hard for children to eat and sleep well.



Gum disease affects a child's blood sugar level and contributes to **diabetes**.





ORAL HEALTH SERVICES

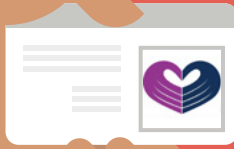
Children should start receiving preventive dental services as soon as their first tooth appears or by the time they turn 1.

Dental care is included with your child's Medi-Cal or Covered California insurance and covers many services such as regular check-ups, exams, X-rays, cleanings, sealants, fillings, fluoride treatments, tooth extractions, root canals, relief of pain and infection, medically necessary orthodontics and emergency services.

DENTAL COVERAGE FOR CHILDREN

MEDI-CAL

All children, regardless of immigration status, can sign up for Medi-Cal coverage if their family meets income requirements. Your Medi-Cal Benefits Identification Card



is also your child's dental coverage card. To find a dentist that accepts Medi-Cal, call (800) 322-6384, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., or look online at www.denti-cal.ca.gov. Click on "Members" → "Medi-Cal Dental" → "Smile, California".

NEW MEDI-CAL DENTAL BENEFITS

Families can now access expanded oral health services for their children. These services include an assessment to help determine your child's risk for tooth decay with recommendations about how to reduce their risk of future cavities (known as a Caries Risk Assessment), as well as the use of Silver Diamine Fluoride (SDF), a liquid substance used to help prevent tooth cavities from forming, growing or spreading to other teeth for children ages 0 to 6.

COVERED CALIFORNIA

When you enroll your child in a Covered California health plan, they are automatically enrolled in dental coverage. Contact your health plan to find a dentist or if you have questions about their dental care. For more information, visit www.coveredca.com or call (800) 300-1506.

Parents, single adults and pregnant women may also be eligible for many dental benefits through Medi-Cal or Covered California. For more information on **Covered California**, call (800) 300-1506 or visit www.coveredca.com. To learn more about **Medi-Cal Dental Coverage (also known as Denti-Cal)**, call (800) 322-6384 or visit www.denti-cal.ca.gov.

YOU CAN HELP PREVENT TOOTH DECAY

You can help your child prevent tooth decay at home by following these steps:



START EARLY:

Clean your baby's gums by gently wiping them with a soft clean cloth. Visit the dentist once their first tooth appears or by their **first birthday** – whichever comes first.



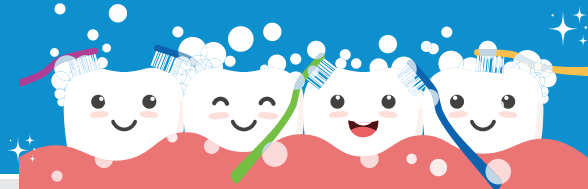
BUILD HEALTHY HABITS:

Make sure your child brushes their teeth for two minutes, two times a day. Choose a toothpaste for your child that contains **fluoride**, a naturally occurring mineral that helps protect and strengthen teeth.



BEYOND BRUSHING:

- » **Floss:** Once your child has at least two teeth next to one another, teach the basics of flossing. Children usually need help **flossing** until they are **8 to 10 years old**.
- » **Reduce Sugar Intake:** What your child eats and drinks affects their **oral health**. Sugar contributes to **tooth decay** and about half of children's sugar intake comes from **juice and soda**. **Choosing water** instead of sugary drinks like juice and soda can help keep your child's mouth healthy. If you do give your child juice, try mixing it with water so it is half juice and half water.



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