



COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE: Children's Oral Health

Effects of Decay:

Dental health problems can result in hours lost from school, costly dental treatments and hospital-based medical and surgical treatments. The following effects are related to tooth decay in children:

- Extreme pain
- Spread of infection
- Difficulty chewing
- Nutrition
- Costly dental treatment
- Additional decay and permanent dentition
- Missed school days
- Impaired speech development
- Inability to concentrate
- Reduced self-esteem



MITIGATE RISK:

There are multiple ways you can help prevent tooth decay. The following are a list of options providers and parents may engage to help children learn to care for their oral health.

- Teach children about the importance of oral health
- Serve children healthy food options
- Clean infants' gums with a cloth or a small toothbrush
- Brush with fluoride toothpaste once teeth appear
- Check for fluoride in drinking water
- Check child's mouth often
- Obtain preventive oral health care (fluoride varnish)

During Pregnancy:

During pregnancy mothers can begin the early process to positive oral care. Start by receiving oral care and visiting with a dentist regularly. As recommended, brush your teeth twice daily with fluoride toothpaste. Avoid eating foods that are unhealthy and can leave harmful residue on your teeth. Finally, be sure to remove breast milk or formula from the baby's teeth with a cloth or a small toothbrush after feeding. Residue remains for the entirety of the day, and the more food sits on your infants/toddlers' teeth, the more likely they are to develop cavities.

During Feeding:

Children may be introduced to juice around 12 months of age. Not only does age matter, but the amount of juice the child drinks matters. It is recommended juice only be served in 4 to 6 ounces per day for this age range, as well as only serving at set mealtimes. When incorporating juice, be sure that your child is also drinking plenty of water. Food is recommended to be served at set times throughout the day. Remove using food as a reward for good behavior. Grazing and adding in foods not scheduled throughout the day increased the child's likelihood of getting cavities and avoid dipping pacifiers in sweetened foods such as sugar or honey.



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MITIGATE RISK:



Brushing Teeth at Home:

- Younger children: knee to knee or baby burrito for oral hygiene
- Older children: stay behind the child for good visualization and easy arm movements

Tooth brushing

Recommendations:

- Use soft-bristled age-appropriate brush
- Toothpaste size:
 - Smear for children under 3 years of age
 - Pea size for children ages 3 to 6
- Brush two times a day, spit toothpaste (don't rinse)
- Supervise cleanings until age 7 or 8

Checking inside the child's mouth:

Parents and providers can help prevent tooth decay by looking for the early signs of decay.

- Early stages: look for white chalky lines and use fluoride to prevent cavities
- Moderate stages: look for brown or white holes. Teeth may appear as they are melting away. Treatment is required at this point.
- Severe stages: large holes, broken teeth, abscesses and pain. This requires extensive treatment.

Adult Dental Benefits:

Active as of January 2021, a new benefit allows for preventative and restorative services, capping at \$1,000 year. This is for eligible adults 21 and older under West Virginia Medicaid Managed Care Organization's (MCO): The Health Plan, Aetna and Unicare.



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TIPS

- Dental home should be established at the time the first tooth emerges and no later than 1 year of age.
- Dental visits should occur before the age of one.
- Prepare your child for the dental visit. This can be reading a story, doing arts and crafts, etc.
- Avoid using words such as “shot”, “drill” or “hurt”.
- Providers should lift the lip when performing check-ups to detect the early signs of tooth decay.
- Supervise your child's brushing until the age of seven or eight.
- Brush twice a day with fluoride.
- Use a smear of toothpaste for children under 3 years of age, and a pea size for children 3 to 6 years of age.
- Talk to your provider about fluoride varnish and effects in preventing tooth decay on baby and permanent teeth.

RESOURCES

WV Medicaid Provider Directory:

<https://www.wvmmis.com/MhpViewer.aspx?auth=0&Url=https://www.wvmmis.com/MyHealthPAS/Provider/Pages/ProviderDirectory.aspx>

West Virginia Oral Health Coalition: <https://wvohc.org/resources/>

Substance Use Recovery Grant under the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation:
<https://tgkvf.org/>

COMMUNITY RESOURCES:

- Community clinics
- Dental schools
- Health department
- Training programs
- Volunteer clinics
- Mobile dental programs
- Private practice
- Free clinics
- Federally qualified centers