

Oral Healthcare Tips for PCPs

Quality Toolkit

Oral Healthcare Recommendations

Aetna Better Health always tries to come up with different ways to help our members and your patients with their healthcare. Routine home care instructions of brushing and flossing, along with reminders to bi-annual routine preventive visits with a dentist helps to ensure oral health as most oral diseases are preventable. And many oral diseases have been linked to physical health. **Even though medical providers do not provide extensive preventive dental services during office visits, you still play a vital role in helping our members' oral health.** How can you help?

- Involve parents or legal guardians by informing that most oral disease is preventable.
- Inform parents that “Baby” teeth are important for many reasons. They contribute to proper speech and function in mastication. They have the same risk of developing caries and abscesses, which needs to be avoided to allow for proper development.
- Per the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry that every child needs to see a dental provider by the eruption of first tooth or latest by the age of 1.
- Have credible resources available for parents.
 - Refer parents to this helpful [guide](#) from the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry on tooth decay.



Dental caries is the single most common chronic disease in children, but it's an entirely preventable one.

- Apply fluoride varnish to all pediatric patients during well child visits.
- Advise members/parents that members between the ages of 2-20 may be eligible to receive a gift card for going to the dentist for a preventive dental visit if they are an ABH member. This encourages members to keep appointments once they are referred and scheduled with a dentist.
- And most importantly refer all members to a dentist and inform them that there is no cost to them for checkups, cleaning and most treatments.

Importance of Dental Referrals

Formally refer and assist all members with scheduling appointments with participating dental providers at the end of the well visit.

- Have a list of area dentists available for referral.
- Dentists prevent oral disease or provide treatment for caries and infections, as well as diagnose more serious problems related to the oral cavity. Many oral diseases have been linked to physical health.



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The importance of fluoride varnish for pediatric patients

Take advantage of Well Child care to educate on oral healthcare and offer fluoride varnish treatments.

What kind of providers can apply fluoride varnish?

- PCPs (pediatricians and physicians that see eligible pediatric enrollees)
- Physician Assistants
- Nurse Practitioners

What is Fluoride Varnish?

- A dental treatment that can help strengthen enamel, prevent tooth decay, slow it down, or stop it from getting worse.
- Most effective when used with:
 - Brushing with fluoride toothpaste
 - Flossing regularly
 - Regular oral healthcare
 - Eating a healthy diet and avoiding constant exposure to acidic and sugary drinks and foods, especially at bedtime.

How is Fluoride Varnish Put on the Teeth?

- Painted on the top and sides of each tooth with a small brush.
- Quickly hardens after application.
- Cannot be licked off after application.
- Can temporarily discolor teeth- brushes off after 4 -12 hours.

General Guidelines – Caring for teeth after fluoride varnish application

- Children can eat and drink right after the fluoride varnish is applied.

- Only soft foods and cold or warm (not hot) foods or liquids.
- Do not brush or floss teeth for at least 4 to 6 hours.

Coding & Reimbursement Guidelines for applying fluoride varnish in a Primary Care Setting

- The fluoride varnish bundled service is billed separately from the EPSDT visit using CPT code 99188 and ICD-10 code Z41.8, effective October 1, 2015.
- Training is required for reimbursement of fluoride varnish application.
- Go to <https://www.smilesforlifeoralhealth.org/buildcontent.aspx?pagekey=101563&lastpagekey=101564&userkey=15118739&sessionkey=5329725&tut=555&customerkey=84&custsitegroupkey=0> and complete the “Fluoride Varnish” and “Oral Exam” courses.
- Print the certificate of completion and/or complete the Fluoride Varnish Application Attestation Form as proof of training and retain the proof on file for record review.

Dental Sealants

Aside from fluoride varnish treatments, you can further promote good oral healthcare with children and their family during routine care in your office. One treatment you can mention to patients is dental sealants. Dental sealants are a very effective preventive dental procedure available for both children and adults. They are noninvasive, inexpensive, and it is a covered benefit through our plan if the child has not previously received the treatment.

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Dental sealants are a thin protective barrier for the back teeth that keep bacteria and food particles from settling on the chewing surfaces of the back teeth. Dental sealants can also be applied over areas that are showing signs of early caries or cavity development. They can be applied during routine oral health visit with a dental practitioner. Along with a healthy diet, routine brushing and flossing, dental sealants will contribute to healthy teeth and overall physical health in your patients.

Oral Healthcare During Pregnancy

Advise expectant mothers that oral health is important for them as well as their baby during pregnancy and after giving birth.

- It is very important to refer expectant mothers to a dental provider. Have a list of area dentists available for referral.
 - Caries are contagious. Moms with cavities in particular, can transmit cavity-causing oral bacteria to their babies. Referring to the dentist early will allow patient education to reduce transmission from caretaker to the baby.
- Hormonal changes during pregnancy can increase chances of developing gum disease.
 - Gums will be tender and can bleed easily.
- Stomach acids from vomiting can damage tooth enamel and increase risk of tooth decay. Take the following steps when combatting vomiting while pregnant.

- Rinse your mouth thoroughly with plain tap water.
- Follow up with a fluoridated mouthwash.
or
- Use a dab of fluoridated toothpaste on your finger and smear it over your teeth.
- Rinse thoroughly with water.
- Brush teeth last to be sure stomach acids are rinsed from teeth first (stomach acids can scratch enamel when brushing).
- Routine oral healthcare decreases the risk of preterm delivery and low birth weight babies, as well as improves overall oral and physical health for expectant mothers.
- Inform the expectant mothers that dental radiographs, check-ups and cleanings are safe for an expecting mother.
- And don't forget to give basic information about the oral health of the baby to be:
 - "Baby" teeth are important for many reasons. They contribute to proper speech and function in mastication. They have the same risk of developing caries and abscesses, which needs to be avoided to allow for proper development.
 - And that per the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry that every child needs to see a dental provider by the eruption of first tooth or latest by the age of 1.

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DID YOU KNOW...

TOOTH DECAY IS ONE OF THE TOP CHRONIC INFECTIOUS DISEASES AMONG CHILDREN IN THE U.S.?

Many parents are surprised to learn that tooth decay can begin as early as age 1. Children with tooth decay are far more likely to develop immediate and long term oral health issues, including pain, infections, difficulty speaking, problems eating food, tooth discoloration and even tooth loss.

But with the help of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, you can join the Monster-Free Mouths Movement and keep your child's mouth free of creatures like Tartar the Terrible, Ginger Bite-Us and Tooth D.K. Below are important tips to help kids have monster-free mouths—at all ages!



BIRTH-2 YEARS OLD:

- 🦷 Before teeth erupt, **CLEAN YOUR BABY'S MOUTH AND GUMS** with a soft cloth or infant toothbrush at bath time. This helps prepare your baby for the teeth cleaning to come.
- 🦷 If your baby is given a bottle when going to sleep, use **NOTHING BUT WATER**. Bottles containing any sugary liquids or carbohydrates such as milk, formula or fruit juice, put teeth under attack from bacterial acid all night long.
- 🦷 **NEVER DIP A PACIFIER IN ANYTHING SWEET**; that pesky Tooth D.K. can show up.
- 🦷 Give your baby a firm rubber **TEETHING RING** to chew on to help with the discomfort and potential pain of **TEETHING**. Avoid liquid-filled teething rings, or any plastic objects that might break.
- 🦷 Talk to your child's pediatric dentist about the **RIGHT AMOUNT OF FLUORIDE** for your child. Ask if your child should be brushing with toothpaste that contains fluoride and/or if your child needs a fluoride supplement.
- 🦷 Take your child to see a pediatric dentist by his or her first birthday to establish a **DENTAL HOME**. Your dentist can help you establish a daily regimen, provide recommendations and determine your next visit.



2-5 YEARS OLD:

- 🦷 Remember to brush your child's teeth at least **TWICE A DAY**, once in the morning and once at night. The most important time to brush your child's teeth is **RIGHT BEFORE BEDTIME**.
- 🦷 Schedule dental visits **EVERY SIX MONTHS** to keep away Mouth Monsters, especially the dreaded Tooth D.K. The routine teeth cleanings at regular check-ups help remove pests like Tartar the Terrible and Ginger Bite-Us.
- 🦷 Sucking on a thumb, finger and pacifier can affect your child's teeth the same way: sucking for prolonged periods of time may cause the upper front teeth to tip outward or not come in properly. Most children stop this habit on their own; if not, try to **DISCOURAGE IT BY AGE 3** or ask your dentist for other creative ideas.
- 🦷 Keep an **EYE ON SNACKING**—ideally children should have no more than three snacks a day.
- 🦷 Parents can begin **FLOSSING** for their children when any two teeth are touching.
- 🦷 **AVOID JUICES** which literally bathe teeth in sugar. Try to limit the amount of juice you give to your child to less than 6 oz. per day.
- 🦷 Talk to your child's pediatric dentist about the **RIGHT AMOUNT OF FLUORIDE** for your child. Ask if your child should be brushing with toothpaste that contains fluoride and/or if your child needs a fluoride supplement.



SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN:

- 🦷 Parents should supervise the brushing of teeth for school-aged children until they are **SEVEN OR EIGHT YEARS OLD**.
- 🦷 When teeth are touching, it is time to **BEGIN FLOSSING**. Ask the pediatric dentist for tips on flossing your child's teeth.
- 🦷 In addition to brushing and flossing your child can **CHEW GUM WITH XYLITOL**, a non-sugar naturally occurring substance, to stimulate saliva flow which helps to clean the mouth (just make sure to ask the teacher!).
- 🦷 Remember to **PROTECT YOUR CHILD'S TEETH WITH A MOUTHGUARD** when they participate in physical activities, including sports and leisure activities. Consult your child's pediatric dentist to determine which type of mouthguard is most appropriate for your child.
- 🦷 **AVOID CARBONATED BEVERAGES** which can erode enamel on teeth; sport drinks and juice pouches are also bad for teeth as they keep acid levels high—which the Mouth Monsters like!

Join the Monster-Free Mouths Movement today! Visit MYCHILDRENSTEETH.ORG for tips and resources, including a pediatric dentist finder and a fun Mouth Monsters toolkit to help encourage healthy dental habits for your child.

