

Healthy Smiles Begin with Early and Proper Care

Even before your child's first teeth begin to show, you need to take care of them. Here are tips for lifelong care.

Help protect your baby's first teeth.¹

- Before teeth show, clean your baby's gums with a soft cloth after eating.
- Teach your child how to brush properly at age 2 or 3. Make sure your child brushes correctly. Children should brush and floss on their own by age 7 or 8. Ask the dentist how to brush and floss the right way.
- Use toothpaste that has fluoride for children ages 2 and older. Be sure to show your child - when he or she is 2, how to brush, and that he or she only uses a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Also, teach your child to spit out the used toothpaste and rinse well.
- Don't put your child to bed with a bottle of milk, formula, juice or other sweet liquid. They can cause tooth decay.
- Change your child's toothbrush three to four times a year, and after every illness.
- If you have questions or concerns about your child's teeth, contact your dentist.

Teach your child how to brush.²

Children should brush their teeth twice a day, with a child-sized, soft-bristled brush. When brushing, your child should:

- Gently move the brush back and forth in short (toothwide) strokes.
- Brush the outside of each tooth, the inside of each tooth, and the chewing surfaces of the teeth.
- Clean the inside of the front teeth with the tip of the brush, using a gentle up-and-down stroke.
- Brush the tongue to remove bacteria and freshen breath.

Why floss?³

Flossing is good for your child's gums, and it's easy! Dental floss is a special string that can clean the tight spaces between teeth where a toothbrush can't reach. Dental floss is good for removing plaque under the gums as well. Plaque is a yellowish film that builds up on teeth and causes tooth decay and gum disease. Gum disease is the main cause of tooth loss.



Start flossing your child's teeth early.⁴

You should begin flossing your child's teeth when the teeth begin to touch (often, there are spaces between teeth). Follow these easy steps to floss the right way.

- Break off about 18 inches of floss. Wind it around the middle fingers of each hand.
- Hold the floss tightly between your fingers and thumbs.
- Gently rub the floss between your child's teeth. Don't snap the floss into the gums!
- Remember to floss the back side of each tooth.

Fluoride has many benefits.⁵

Fluoride is a mineral that can stop or even reverse tooth decay. Some cities add fluoride to tap water. You also can get fluoride from many brands of toothpaste and mouth rinse, or by asking a dentist. Thanks to fluoride, children growing up today have fewer cavities than their grandparents had. Ask your child's dentist for other options if your drinking water does not have fluoride in it.

We are here to help you.

Talk to your doctor or nurse to learn more about keeping your child's teeth healthy. Or call the American Dental Association. You also can call MedCall®, the 24-hour nurse help line. To learn more online, go to www.ada.org.

Fluoride mouth rinses and dietary fluoride supplements should not be used for young children unless recommended by a dentist or other health professional.

BlueChoice HealthPlan Medicaid

Customer Care Center: **1-866-781-5094**

TTY line: **1-866-773-9634**

MedCall®: **1-866-577-9710**

TTY line: **1-800-368-4424**

www.bluechoicescmedicaid.com

TTY lines are only for members with hearing and speech loss.



Medicaid

Sources: ¹National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, National Institutes of Health, *A Healthy Mouth for Your Baby* (Accessed August 2009): <http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/OralHealth/Topics/ToothDecay/AHealthyMouthforYourBaby.htm>

²Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Children's Oral Health* (Accessed August 2009): <http://www.cdc.gov/OralHealth/topics/child.htm>

³Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Take Charge of Your Diabetes, Preventing Dental Problems* (Accessed August 2009): <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/pubs/tcyd/dental.htm#prevent>

⁴U.S. National Institutes of Health, *Taking Care of Your Teeth and Mouth* (Accessed August 2009): <http://www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/teeth.htm>

⁵Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Community Water Fluoridation* (Accessed August 2009): <http://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/other.htm#1>

This information is being provided for general information purposes only and is not the practice of medicine or a substitute for the independent medical judgment of a treating physician. Only a treating physician can determine what treatment is appropriate for a patient.

BlueChoice HealthPlan is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. ® BlueChoice, BlueCross, BlueShield and the Cross and Shield symbols are registered marks of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

® MedCall is a registered mark of WellPoint, Inc. Medicaid managed care administered by WellPoint Partnership Plan, LLC, an independent company. ©2010