

Important Facts You
Should Know About
**Dental and Oral Care for
You and Your Children**



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Take care of your teeth and they’ll take care of you.

Have you ever heard that saying before? Well, it is true. With daily brushing and flossing, regular dental appointments and other basic care, you can help stop tooth decay and long-term health problems. At the same time, you can make your teeth and your children’s teeth healthy and strong for life.

We want to help you gain and maintain good dental health. We want to make choosing and visiting a dentist simple and hassle-free. Since we play an important role in good dental health, we put together this guide to help you teach your child smart dental practices at home. You will also find tips on how to use the dental program effectively. Please take a few minutes to read this booklet, and share it with your children. They – and their beautiful, healthy teeth – will thank you!

Why good oral health is so important

We all enjoy a beautiful smile, but there is only so much credit we can give to nature – it is up to parents and children to maintain healthy teeth.

Poor dental habits can lead to cavities, also called tooth decay, or gum disease that develops from bacteria which build up in our mouths. It is from not brushing or flossing your teeth properly and regularly. Left unchecked, these bacteria can cause bad breath and more serious problems like cavities and tooth loss.

Did you know the condition of your mouth impacts the health of your whole body? Cavities and gum disease can lead to serious medical problems like some types of heart disease. Poor oral health has been linked to low birth-weight babies and oral cancer, and makes some diseases such as diabetes difficult to control. Teeth that are not properly cared for cause pain and discomfort, making eating more difficult. Tooth or gum pain makes paying attention and participating in school or work difficult. It also can lead to longer term dental health problems.



Starting at the beginning: your child's first teeth, two months old

Those first tiny teeth have just poked through and they are adorable! Now is the time to begin practicing smart dental habits. Caring properly for these first “baby teeth” is important because:

- They allow permanent teeth to develop and grow into the correct place in the mouth.
- They help your child learn to speak correctly.
- They help your children to chew their food properly.

It is very important to take care of your child's first set of teeth just like adult teeth. “Baby teeth” can get cavities just like adult teeth and that can lead to more serious dental problems later on.

The good news is that cavities and gum disease can be prevented!

Tooth decay is caused by bacteria which live on sugar and starchy foods such as cookies, candy, soda and sugar drinks. These bacteria can be spread from one person to another. Gum disease happens because of poor oral care which leads to the buildup of bacteria on the teeth called plaque. A buildup of plaque on the teeth can lead to either cavities or gum disease. Mild gum disease is called gingivitis and the more severe form of gum disease is called periodontal disease. Gum disease causes the gums around the teeth to become red and swollen and even bleed when the teeth are flossed or brushed.

The bacteria that causes cavities and gum disease are often passed on to children by their care givers. One way this happens is when a care giver tastes the baby's food and then feeds the baby from the same spoon. It is very important not to share utensils with children. Never clean a pacifier or bottle nipple by placing it in your mouth.



Healthful steps to help your child have healthy teeth

You can develop good simple oral health practices and prevent oral disease by following these steps:

- **DO** Give your child healthy snacks like fresh fruit and vegetables.
- **DON'T** Give your child starchy or sugar-containing foods and snacks.
 - **DO** Give your child a bottle with milk or formula at feeding time and sugar-free liquids at other times.
 - **DO** Encourage your child to drink from a cup. A child should be weaned from the bottle by 12 to 14 months.
 - **DON'T** Dip your child's pacifier in sugar-containing drinks. Keep the pacifier clean.
 - **DON'T** Put your child to bed with a bottle unless it contains only water.
 - **DO** Gently brush your child's teeth with a soft brush for 2 minutes at least twice a day. For children under age two, use plain water. For children over two, use a very tiny amount of toothpaste (the size of a pea).

- **DO** Help your child brush their teeth at least until age 7.
- **DON'T** Rinse with water after brushing!
- **DO** Be sure to brush before bedtime, it is very important.
- **DO** Teach your children how to brush properly, reaching every surface of each tooth.
- **DO** Take your child to the dentist by their first birthday.
- **DO** Speak with your dentist about the use of fluoride.
- **DO** Speak with your dentist about the use of pacifiers and finger sucking habits your child may have.
- **DO** Clean each toothbrush weekly by placing the bristle end in boiling water or by placing the toothbrush in the dishwasher or leaving it overnight in mouthwash, then rinsing it with hot water before using it.
- **DO** Replace all toothbrushes every three months.

As your child grows up: age 1 year and up

Continue the good dental health practices you started when your children were younger. Here are other things you will need to know about your children's teeth and oral health as they grow up:

- **DO** Make sure your child has a dental home (regular dentist).
- **DO** Teach children to floss when permanent teeth come in. This should be done every night before bed, before brushing teeth.
- **DO** Ask your dentist about the use of sealants when your child's adult back teeth start to come in (around five or six years of age).
- **DO** Ask your dentist about a mouth guard if your child plays contact sports.
- **DO** Ask your child's dentist about the dangers of oral piercings in lips, gums or the tongue. They can severely harm teeth or gums.
- **DO** Talk with your child's dentist about the use of tobacco products and what you can do to help your child understand the dangers of using tobacco.



We are always adding to the number of dentists and dental locations participating with the dental plan, making it easier for you to find a practice that is close to your home, child's school or place of work.

Your children should visit their dentist by their first birthday. Children should be seen twice a year (every 6 months) or more often if required by the dentist or if there are problems such as pain or discomfort. Adults should be seen at least once a year or as recommended by their dentist.

Making your appointment

The relationship between you and your dentist is an important partnership for good dental and oral health. We want to help make sure each visit goes smoothly and avoid missed appointments. Here are some simple tips that will help you book your appointment easily:

- When you are ready to schedule an appointment for you or your child, make sure you have your identification number or your child's identification number (on the gray Connect Card), personal information and a pen and paper ready.
- Write down and save the name and correct address of the dental office, the date and time of your appointment and the dentist's phone number.
- When you make the appointment, ask if there is anything the dentist would like you to bring with you.
- When making the appointment let the office know of any special needs you or your child may have (such as language barriers, special healthcare needs, or physical or emotional disabilities).

By being prepared you help your provider make the appointment with ease and it prevents you having to call back with additional information.

Arranging transportation for your dental appointment

If you are not able to use public transportation, drive or get a ride to your or to your child's appointment, call your transportation broker, listed at the end of this booklet. Call after you have made the dental appointment for you and/or your child. Call as soon as you can, but always allow at least 48 hours of advance notice to arrange transportation. (Service is for HUSKY A and Medicaid clients only.)

It's a good idea to arrive a few minutes ahead of your scheduled appointment time in order to complete any necessary paperwork.

Dental Customer Service

The Customer Service Number for the Connecticut Dental Health Partnership is **1-866-420-2924**. You can call toll-free, Monday to Friday, from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

The customer service representatives will help you locate a dentist and set up transportation and translation services, if needed for you and your child.

Getting the most out of your dental appointment

You can help make the dental visit a good experience with some basic steps and be actively involved in the appointment. Here are some steps to remember:

- Bring any information the dentist may need including the name and address of your primary care provider (PCP), your health plan card and a list of medications you or your children may take.
- Bring the gray Connect Cards for you and any family members who will be seen.
- Bring a photo I.D. card for yourself.
- Arrive a few minutes early if you can, to stay on schedule, and in case you have to fill out forms.
- Make the trip a good experience for children by talking about good oral health. Brush their teeth just prior to leaving for the visit and avoid using words such as "shot", "pain" or "hurt."

- Review any changes that have occurred in your child's or your health with the hygienist or dentist before being treated. Be sure to tell the dentist about allergies or medications you or your child are taking.
- Be active in your child's and your own oral care by asking questions and reviewing instructions for home care. If something is not clear, ask the dentist or hygienist to repeat their directions for care or medications.
- Talk with your dentist about proper nutrition, fluoride and your child's dental health.
- Talk with your dentist about the effects of smoking or chewing tobacco if you smoke cigarettes, cigars or pipes or chew tobacco products.
- Talk to your dentist before getting oral piercings, many times they can severely harm the teeth or gums.



Some basic tips to make your visit more comfortable and effective

- If possible, only you and your children who have dental appointments should go to the dental office.
- Do not leave young children unattended in the waiting room.
- Arrive on time.
- Bring a small toy or books for your child to play with quietly in the waiting room.
- Try to speak in low, quiet tones.
- Do not wear strong aftershave, colognes or perfumes. Some people are sensitive to strong scents.
- Do not bring food or drinks to the waiting room.
- Do not use your cell phone in the doctor's waiting room.
- Take all items you brought into the waiting room with you when you enter the treatment room.
- Make an appointment for your next visit before you leave the office.
- Make sure your children behave in the waiting room and dentist's office.

If you cannot keep your appointment

If you can not keep an appointment, it is very important that you call your dentist's office and let them know as soon as possible. Do not forget to contact your transportation broker to notify them as well. Whenever possible, allow at least 48 hours of advance notice on all cancellations. This will help the office to use the time allotted to your visit for another patient. Please use your cancellation call to reschedule the appointment, as well – do not put it off!

We know people get sick, that work or life events may interfere, and that rides sometimes fall through at the last moment. This visit is your time for you and your child and is important. Rescheduling at the last moment or not showing up extends the time before you or your child can be seen. It could also leave another patient who could use your time slot without needed dental services.

Good oral hygiene practices are important to you – and your children’s health, both for ensuring strong, healthy teeth and for better health throughout a person’s lifetime. It is critical that parents teach their children how to care for their teeth, and take an active role in that care. The Connecticut Dental Health Partnership is here to help – call us anytime with questions or to make your appointments, and remember:

**Take care of your teeth,
and they will take care of you!**

Important contact information

Here are the phone numbers you need for accessing your dental plan services:

- To find a dental provider, call the Connecticut Dental Health Partnership: **1-866-420-2924**
Toll-free, Monday to Friday, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM
- For transportation services, call your transportation broker:

If you are in the Medicaid Program,
call Logisticare: **1-888-248-9895**

If you are in the HUSKY A Program,
call CTS: **1-800-818-6761**

- For additional information, visit our website: **www.ctdhp.com**

The Connecticut Dental Health Partnership is administered
by the Department of Social Services for State health coverage beneficiaries.

Coordination of services provided by BeneCare.

