



Oral health matters

Working together to help prevent tooth decay in children

Maintaining good oral health is about more than just a sparkling smile – it’s also important for good overall health. This is especially true for children. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), tooth decay in children can lead to problems with eating, speaking and learning.¹

One of the best ways to promote good oral health in children is for primary care providers (PCPs) and dental providers to work together. Because most young children visit their pediatrician or family physician for well-child visits many times before their first dental visit, PCPs play an important role in helping children establish good dental hygiene practices and referring them to a primary dental provider, or dental home.

Tooth decay is largely preventable, yet it ranks as the most common chronic disease among children.

How you can help promote good oral health in children

1. Talk to parents about the importance of good oral health and encourage them to schedule a dental visit for their child before their first birthday.
2. Assess the child’s risk of oral health problems. Early forms of tooth decay, such as white spots, are easy to identify during an examination.
3. Apply fluoride varnish to help prevent tooth decay. The Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) requires physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners to complete training in order to be reimbursed for administering fluoride varnish to children. To complete the training, follow these steps:
 - Go to aap.org > Patient Care > Oral Health > Education and Training > Smiles for Life National Oral Health Curriculum > Online Courses > Caries Risk Assessment Fluoride Varnish and Counseling
 - Download your certificate of completion once you’ve completed the course
 - Submit your certificate of completion to the Council for Affordable Quality Healthcare (CAQH) by uploading it at proview.caqh.org/Login.

23%
of children ages 2-5 have experienced tooth decay in their primary (baby) teeth.²

52%
of children ages 6-8 have experienced tooth decay in their primary (baby) teeth.³

57%
of adolescents ages 12-19 have experienced tooth decay in their permanent teeth.²



We’re here to help

If you have questions, please email Sue Fox, Clinical Practice Consultant, at sue_fox@uhc.com.

¹ CDC: cdc.gov/oralhealth/basics/childrens-oral-health/index.html
² CDC: cdc.gov/oralhealth/pdfs_and_other_files/Oral-Health-Surveillance-Report-2019-h.pdf
³ CDC: Vital signs: dental sealant use and untreated tooth decay among US school-aged children