



Children's Dental Health

(NAPSA)—Healthy teeth are an important part of your child's overall well-being, so make sure you are doing all you can to protect their teeth and gums.

"According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, tooth decay remains the most common chronic disease in children, though it is almost entirely preventable," said Walter Lucio, DDS, MPH, a dental consultant for *Smile, California*, Medi-Cal Dental's campaign to improve oral health among its members.

Daily brushing and flossing are important to help your child have a healthy smile, and so are regular dental check-ups.

"Children should start seeing the dentist when their first tooth appears and every six months thereafter," explains Dr. Lucio. "Parents who set this routine early will help their child with a lifetime of good oral health."

While free dental exams are provided with Medi-Cal—and most insurance plans—less than half of children enrolled in the program have been to the dentist.

To help, *Smile, California* aims to increase dental utilization among all 13.5 million members, especially children. This includes preventive services such as teeth cleanings, fluoride treatments and molar sealants as well as restorative services to fix problems.

Smile, California offers these five tips to keep your child's teeth and gums in great shape.

1. Do it Right from the Start: Caring for your baby's smile begins the moment he or she is born. Baby teeth do fall out, but it is important to take good care of them until they do. Baby teeth help your child chew and speak properly.



For a bright smile and healthy mouth, have your children see a dentist every six months.

2. Go to the Dentist: Use your free or low-cost Medi-Cal dental services and see a dentist for regular check-ups and cleanings. Your baby should see a dentist at the first tooth or first birthday, whichever comes first. After their first visit, they will need to go to the dentist every six months.

3. Practice Good Habits Every Day: Help your child with proper daily oral hygiene, schedule regular dental check-ups, and limit sugary foods or drinks to lower the risk of infection, gum disease and tooth decay. Be a good role model with your healthy habits.

4. Ask for Molar Sealants: Protect your child's permanent molars from harmful bacteria and cavities by scheduling a check-up and asking the dentist to apply molar sealants. It's quick, painless and can last for years.

5. Seek Care Right Away: If your child has unexpected dental problems or concerns in between your regularly scheduled visits, call your dental office for help. If your child is in pain, see your dentist right away or go to the emergency room.

Visit SmileCalifornia.org for more oral health information and helpful tips, to learn about covered services and to find a dentist.