

Dental Health Issues for Children

Thoughts for families

- Dental health is more than teeth – it also includes mouth, face, nutrition, speech, chewing, swallowing, appearance, well being, and confidence.
- Ideas about dental health and what can be done may be different from when you were growing up. New dental procedures such as sealants, cosmetic treatments, and pain management have been added and improved.
- Experiences and beliefs about dental care vary from country to country.
- Cost and coverage can be barriers to good dental care
 - High costs of care
 - Lack of information about how to get services covered
 - Families with coverage may face red tape and delays in determining what is covered, pre-approvals, and co-pays.
- Providers may be hard to find, especially for those with Medicaid or certain dental plans.



- Family-centered care exists in some, but not all, dental practices. Needed is:
 - Understanding of families' roles in day to day care and special situations
 - Information especially for families and children
 - Support for children and families
- Communication and coordination among child health providers - dentists, pediatricians, and other caregivers – is needed.
- Dental care is not typically part of regular health insurance, conveying a confusing message.

Dental Health Issues for Children with Special Health Care Needs

Thoughts for families

All of the issues mentioned on the previous page may also apply for children with special needs. These issues may be “heightened.” Additional concerns may include:



- Need for accessibility, modification, accommodation. Dental offices and practices should comply with Americans' with Disabilities Act standards.
- Staff attitudes and comfort caring for children with special needs
- Staff training to address information, support, and specific treatments for children with special needs.
- Medications a child is taking may cause increases in cavities and plaque.
- Appropriate recommendations for anesthesia. Some children may need anesthesia for treatments and procedures that others do not. In other cases, children with special needs may be inappropriately anesthetized.
- Consideration that costs for treatment, equipment and supplies will likely be in addition to other health care costs families face.
- Under managed care, some procedures may be denied, thus requiring families to appeal in order for children to receive needed services.
- Families will need to coordinate dental appointments and care with other health care services and therapies children receive.
- Communication and coordination with children's other health care professionals in order to provide quality, family-centered care.
- Children and families benefit from dental health professionals who act as advocates for children's dental *and other health care and services!*

Note that for some children with special needs, there are no special dental health issues!

Our thanks to Bright Futures at Georgetown University for graphics