# Let’s Talk: Oral Health for Kids

California Department of Education | The Children’s Partnership

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## Why Oral Health Matters

* Oral health problems can make it hard for children to concentrate in school, leading to low grades or even missed school days.
* Taking care of your child’s mouth and teeth will help them become a healthy adult.
* Poor oral health leads to tooth decay, causing pain, infection, and tooth loss.
* The pain and discomfort of tooth decay make it hard for children to eat and sleep well.
* Gum disease affects a child’s blood sugar level and contributes to diabetes.

## Make sure your child:

* Brushes his or her teeth for two minutes, two times a day



* Visits the dentist twice a year

You can help prevent tooth decay!

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## Did you know?

* Tooth decay is the most common children’s chronic disease in the U.S.
* Black, Latino, and American Indian/Alaska-Native children are much more likely to suffer from tooth decay and gum disease than White children.

## Start Early

* Clean your baby’s gums by gently wiping them with a soft clean cloth.
* Visit the dentist once their first tooth appears or by their first birthday – whichever comes first.
* Once your child has at least two teeth next to one another, teach the basics of flossing.
* Children usually need help flossing until they are 8-10 years old.
* Choose a toothpaste for your child that contains fluoride, a naturally occurring mineral that helps protect and strengthen teeth.

## Make Healthy Choices

* What your child eats and drinks affects their oral health.
* Sugar contributes to tooth decay and about half of children’s sugar intake comes from juice and soda.
* Choosing water or milk instead of sugary drinks like juice and soda can help keep your child’s mouth healthy. If you do give your child juice, try mixing it with water so it is half juice and half water.

## Getting Covered



* All children, regardless of immigration status, can sign up for Medi-Cal coverage if their family meets income requirements.
* Dental care is included with your child's Medi-Cal or Covered California.
* Many more services are covered including regular check-ups, sealants, fillings, and emergency services.
* Parents, single adults, and pregnant women may also be eligible for dental benefits through Medi-Cal or Covered California.

## Learn More:

* **Medi-Cal or Covered California:** 1-800-300-1506
* **Medi-Cal Dental Coverage (also known as Denti-Cal):** 1-800-322-6384