

Oral Health for Children in Foster Care



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Welcome!

Did You Know That Tooth Decay Is the Most Common Chronic Childhood Disease in the U.S.?



Nationally, between 41–55% of kids ages 2–11 suffer from tooth decay; 34% untreated



Nearly half of all kids entering kindergarten have at least one cavity



More than 25% of Michigan third graders have untreated dental disease



“Incidence of tooth decay is
4 times more common
among adolescents aged 14
to 17 years than asthma.”

—Centers for Disease Control

What About Tooth Decay Among Children in Foster Care?

- Abundance of literature regarding health needs of children who are in foster care
- Not a lot of studies dedicated specifically to oral health outcomes
- Overall health and oral health outcomes are directly related
 - Positive correlation



“Approximately 35% of children and teens enter foster care with significant dental and oral health problems.”

—American Academy of Pediatrics

What Contributes to Increased Risk?

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
 - Stressful or traumatic events, including abuse and neglect
 - Can affect health and well-being later in life
- A 2014 study concluded that a significant association exists between childhood ACEs and dental health
 - One ACE = increase likelihood of poor oral health outcomes



Dental Requirements for Children Experiencing Foster Care

- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) guidelines
- MDHHS mandates that each child (aged 3 years and older) in foster care receives dental care at specified intervals
- Dental exam within 6 months prior to placement, or up to 90 days after entry
 - Re-examination every 12 months
 - Under 3 years old, must have initial exam within 3 months of the 3rd birthday



Chew On This...

- Are the mandatory requirements alone enough?
 - Meeting these requirements does not necessarily translate to optimal oral health outcomes



What Can We Do About It?

Oral Health Begins at Birth!

Healthy mouth = healthy child

- Keep the newborn's mouth clean
 - Before teeth erupt, use a washcloth to wipe the gums
 - Once the first tooth appears, brush with a soft toothbrush
 - Visit a dentist by age 1 for an oral exam



Baby Teeth are Important

- Children will develop 20 baby teeth
 - First tooth appears around 6 months of age
 - Last baby tooth is shed around 12 years of age
- Baby teeth serve as a placeholder for adult teeth
- Help children chew their food and speak clearly



Establish a Dental Home by Age 1

- Dental assessment
 - Evaluate the mouth and soft tissue
 - Evaluate the teeth and growth patterns
- Apply fluoride varnish as appropriate
- Help children become comfortable in the dental setting



Preventive Services for Ages 2 and Older

- Dental cleaning
- Dental exam
- Fluoride varnish application
- Dental X-rays
- Dental sealants on first and second molars



Prevention Tips for Early On

- Prevent baby bottle decay
- Reduce the risk of spreading germs
- Monitor use of pacifiers and thumb-sucking
- Help establish good oral health habits



Treat Decay, Right Away!

- When decay is diagnosed, return to your dental office for the recommended treatment as soon as possible
- A study of 2005 data from Iowa found 56–65% of children in foster care had a diagnostic or preventive dental visit
 - Only 6% received a restorative visit



Good Dental Habits

- Brush your teeth twice a day
- Floss your teeth once a day
- Daily fluoride mouthwash
- Change your toothbrush every 3–4 months
- Never share your toothbrush with others
- Always use a soft-bristled toothbrush



Getting Kids Interested in Their Teeth

- Make brushing routines fun
 - Sticker charts and sand timers
 - Electric toothbrushes
- Model positive behavior
 - Brush/floss your own teeth with your children
 - Talk about importance of teeth



Oral Health Begins With Overall Health

Help children make healthy food and beverage choices



Rethink Your Drink

Choose Water

Let's not sugarcoat it!

- Soda pop nearly **doubles** risk of cavities in kids
- One 12-oz. soda pop per day increases a child's chances for obesity by **60%**
- People who drink 1–2 cans of soda pop per day have a **26%** greater risk of Type 2 diabetes



Handling Behavior Problems

- If behavioral issues are a concern:
 - Model behavior at the dentist prior to the child having their own visit
 - Let child watch you, grandma, grandpa or other adult
 - Talk about what to anticipate
 - Use positive language
 - Seek pediatric dentist when appropriate



Negative Oral Health Behaviors

- Behaviors that adversely affect oral health:
 - Lack of oral hygiene
 - Poor dietary habits
 - Thumb/finger sucking
 - Holding/storing food in the mouth
 - Chewing on nonedible items
 - Nail-biting
 - Clenching/grinding teeth



Closing Thoughts...

Children can be especially impressionable during this stage in their life

You have so much power to make a positive impact on them

Make the most of it!

*A warm
smile
is the universal
language of
kindness*

Thank You!

Questions?