



Oral Health Care Tips for Pediatricians

Quality Toolkit

Oral Health Care Recommendations

Aetna Better Health® of Virginia strives to come up with different ways to help our members, your patients, with their healthcare. Oral diseases have been linked to physical health and most are preventable.

Dental caries is the single most common chronic disease in children, but are entirely preventable.

Routine home care instructions of brushing and flossing, along with reminders to complete bi-annual routine preventive dental visits helps to ensure good oral health in children.

Even though medical providers do not perform extensive dental services during office visits, you still play a vital role in helping our members' oral health.

How can you help?

- Involve parents or legal guardians by informing them that most oral diseases are preventable and educate them about good oral health.
- Take advantage of well child visits to apply fluoride varnish to all pediatric patients.

- Inform parents that "baby" teeth are important for many reasons.
 - They contribute to proper speech and function in mastication.
 - They have the same risk of developing caries and abscesses, which needs to be avoided to allow for proper development.
- Have credible resources available for parents. Refer parents to **mychildrensteeth.org**, a helpful website about tooth decay, published by the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry.
- And most importantly refer all members to a dentist and inform them that there is no cost to them for checkups, cleaning and most treatments.

Importance of Dental Referrals

Per the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry every child needs to see a dental provider by the eruption of first tooth or latest by the age of one.

Dentists prevent oral disease and provide treatment for caries and infections, as well as diagnose more serious problems related to the oral cavity.

Formally refer and assist all members with scheduling appointments with participating dental providers at the end of the well visit and have a list of area dentists available for referral.

What kind of providers can apply fluoride varnish?

- PCPs (pediatricians and physicians that see eligible pediatric enrollees)
- Physician Assistants
- Nurse Practitioners

What is Fluoride Varnish?

A dental treatment that can help strengthen enamel, prevent tooth decay, slow it down, or stop it from getting worse. It is most effective when used with:

- Brushing with fluoride toothpaste
- Flossing regularly
- Regular oral health care
- Eating a healthy diet and avoiding constant exposure to acidic and sugary foods and drinks, especially at bedtime.

How is Fluoride Varnish Put on the Teeth?

Fluoride varnish is painted on the top and sides of each tooth with a small brush. Once applied, fluoride:

- Quickly hardens.
- Cannot be licked off.
- Can temporarily discolor teeth, but brushes off after 4 to 12 hours.

General Guidelines – Caring for teeth after fluoride varnish application

Children can eat and drink right after the fluoride varnish is applied. However, children should:

- Only eat and drink soft foods and cold or warm (not hot) foods or liquids.
- Not brush or floss teeth for at least four to six hours.

Dental Sealants

You can further promote good oral health care with children and their family during routine care in your office. Dental sealants are a very effective preventive dental procedure available for both children and adults. They are noninvasive, inexpensive, and is a covered benefit through our plan if the child has not previously received the treatment.

Dental sealants are a thin protective barrier that keep bacteria and food particles from settling on the chewing surfaces of the back teeth. They can be applied over areas that are showing signs of early caries or cavity development, during a routine oral health visit with a dental practitioner. Along with a healthy diet, routine brushing and flossing, dental sealants contribute to healthy teeth and overall physical health in your patients.