



# Connecting Kids to Coverage National Campaign

## ORAL HEALTH DROP-IN ARTICLE FOR GENERAL AUDIENCES

Children's access to dental services is essential to their good health and it can be an important factor in motivating parents to enroll their eligible children in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). In fact, 68 percent of parents say receiving dental benefits is why they enroll their children in Medicaid and CHIP, according to a 2011 CMS national survey of low-income parents.

To share the importance of developing positive oral health habits early, CMS has developed a suite of oral health education materials. The article below can be shared with community newspapers and on websites and blogs hosted by child care providers, faith-based and community groups and health and wellness organizations. The italicized line in the first paragraph can be used in February during National Children's Dental Health Month. Visit [InsureKidsNow.gov](http://InsureKidsNow.gov) to access additional oral health resources.

**\*Your state's income limit for a family of four at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). To find the annual FPL figure, visit [ASPE Poverty Guidelines](#). To find the specific FPL guidelines for your state, click [here](#) or contact your state's Medicaid or CHIP program for information. Note: The income level figure will change from year to year based on the annual release of FPL guidelines.**

### [Approximately 380 Words](#)

#### **THINK TEETH! Help Your Children Reduce the Risk of Tooth Decay**

Did you know that tooth decay is the most common chronic disease among children in the United States? The good news is it can be prevented! *[This February, in honor of National Children's Dental Health Month, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) wants to remind parents to "think teeth."]* The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) wants to remind parents to "think teeth."

Parents can help children combat cavities and tooth decay by practicing good daily oral hygiene – even at an early age. Ask your pediatrician about your baby's oral health at the 6-month check-up. And start regular dental check-ups beginning at age one.

#### **Reducing Risk of Tooth Decay**

Children's access to dental services is essential to maintaining good oral health and reducing the risk of tooth decay says the If children don't already have dental coverage, they may be eligible for Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) which includes teeth cleanings, check-ups, x-rays, fluoride, dental sealants and fillings.

Tooth decay is caused by bacteria interacting with sugars in the mouth. The bacteria can be passed from parent to child when, for example, they share spoons or cups. If untreated, this dental disease can result in difficulty eating and speaking, and can interfere with physical and social development and school performance. Tooth decay can be prevented! Using a fluoride varnish, fluoride painted on the teeth, protects "baby" teeth. Dental sealants, a plastic coating which keeps bacteria and sugars away from areas most likely to decay, protects back teeth.

Simple steps to help prevent tooth decay can begin when a child is a baby, such as only putting water, milk or formula in bottles or sippy cups, and never putting babies to bed with a bottle. And as children get older, limit sugary foods and drinks and make sure children brush twice a day for two minutes using fluoride toothpaste.

**For More Information:**

**A family of four with income up to \$50,000\* or more may qualify for free or low-cost health coverage through Medicaid and CHIP. Call 1-877-KIDS-NOW (543-7669) or visit [InsureKidsNow.gov](https://www.insurekidsnow.gov) to learn more about affordable health insurance for your family.**

*The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provided this information.*