

CONNECTING KIDS TO COVERAGE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

Oral Health eNewsletter – September 26, 2013



Think Teeth!

Pregnant women and parents of young children may not realize the importance of developing positive oral health habits early. To help spread the word, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) created [oral health education materials](#) for pregnant women and parents and caregivers of young children. We also are offering [tips](#) for sharing these materials with community partners.

Tooth decay is the most common preventable disease of children in the United States. If left untreated, it can negatively affect a child's physical and social development and school performance. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), the prevalence of tooth decay is increasing in children ages 2 to 5. And during 1999-2004, 33 percent of children ages 2 to 11 in the lowest income households across the country had untreated tooth decay.

CMS is committed to improving access to dental care for children enrolled in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Medicaid and CHIP cover children's dental services, such as teeth cleanings, check-ups, x-rays, fluoride, dental sealants and fillings. CMS set [goals](#) for improvement by FY 2015 through a children's Oral Health Initiative launched in 2010. One goal, for example, calls for states to increase by 10 percentage points the proportion of enrolled children who receive preventive dental care. CMS is collaborating with states, federal partners, the dental provider community, children's advocates, and other stakeholders to reach these goals.

A key part of the initiative is to raise families' awareness of their children's need for routine preventive dental care – and we want them to know that by enrolling their eligible children in Medicaid and CHIP, they will have access to those important benefits. In a [2011 CMS national survey](#), low-income parents specifically cited dental benefits as a motivating factor for enrolling their children in Medicaid and CHIP.

Please share the new oral health education materials widely with child care providers, pre-school and Head Start programs, WIC programs, faith-based and other community service organizations. The materials include:

- **Flyer:** A double-sided 8.5 x 11 inch color flyer in English on one side and Spanish on the other to distribute to parents and caregivers of young children up to age three.
- **Poster:** An 11 x 17 inch color poster, available in English and Spanish, to display in medical offices, community health centers, child care programs, libraries and other public places.
- **Tear Pad:** A 5.5 x 8.5 inch color tear pad in English on one side and Spanish on the other side for providers to give to pregnant women.

These [materials are available for download or ordering](#) on InsureKidsNow.gov.

The oral health outreach tools and a library of [other outreach materials](#) are part of CMS' Connecting Kids to Coverage National Campaign, a nationwide effort to enroll eligible children in free and low-cost health insurance.

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