

# MouthMatters

Integrating Oral Health into Medical Care

## Medical Providers: You Can **Fill the Urgent Gap in Oral Health Care**

With the COVID-19 pandemic, oral health is at **greater risk for many patients**. Dental care is only available for urgent and emergency care. Families' daily routines are upset, money may be in short supply, both of which can lead to unhealthy eating habits and neglect of regular oral hygiene. All of this makes your work as oral health advocates even more important.

### As you may know...

- > Early childhood caries (ECC) is the leading chronic condition of childhood (more prevalent than asthma and allergies).
- > Oral health shares many links to other health problems, especially chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

*Arcora Foundation recommends that all medical health professionals **integrate key oral health education messages into their practices** to remind families about the importance of daily care, good nutrition, and healthy habits.*

## Key Oral Hygiene Messages

### | For caregivers of young children

- 🦷 **Germs can pass from parent to child** by kissing, sharing food, and saliva. It's important for caregivers to practice good oral hygiene and try to limit sharing of saliva as much as possible. Avoid sharing cups and utensils with your children.
- 🦷 **Wipe the baby's gums** after each feeding even before teeth are present.
- 🦷 **Cavities are possible as soon as a tooth is present** – begin brushing immediately with a rice-sized amount of fluoridated tooth paste. After age 3, or when child can spit, use pea-sized amount.
- 🦷 **Brush focusing on the gum line**, with small back and forth or circular motions, along surfaces of all teeth (caregivers help with brushing until at least age 6).
- 🦷 **Parents lift the lip monthly** to check your child for signs of decay.

### | For everyone

- 🦷 **Brush teeth twice a day for 2 minutes** (brush the gum line and tongue) with a clean, soft bristled toothbrush.
- 🦷 **Use fluoride toothpaste.**
- 🦷 **Make tooth brushing a routine and fun activity** by using videos or timers ([sample video](#)).
- 🦷 **Replace toothbrush** every 3 - 4 months.
- 🦷 **Floss daily.**

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## Nutrition Tips

### | For caregivers of young children

- ☞ **Transition** from bottle to sippy cup at 9 - 12 months; fill sippy cup with water
- ☞ **If bottle is given at bedtime**, fill only with water.

### | For everyone

- ☞ **Eat tooth healthy snacks** such as fresh fruit and vegetables, cheese, meats and nuts (nuts can be a choking hazard in young children),
- ☞ **Drink tap water for thirst.** Water with fluoride is best. Avoid sugary beverages including juice, soda, and sports drinks. (If sugary beverages are consumed, make sure it is at meal time to reduce the number of acid attacks on the teeth in a day.)

## Billing

ABCD-trained medical providers can bill MCOs for the Family Oral Health Education 2x/year up to age 6. Use CPT Code 99429 (with modifier DA and modifier CR)—reimbursement \$27.58. Note: document length of time for education.

For question about billing or training contact Madlen Caplow [mcaplow@arcorafoundation.org](mailto:mcaplow@arcorafoundation.org)

## For Dental Information on Urgent Dental Problems

If any of your patients has an urgent dental problem, tell them to call their dental office. If they are not able to reach a dentist or do not have a dental home, DentistLink referral specialists can help find one that is open and accepting patients with urgent needs (translation services available).

### | DentistLink Contact information:

- Website: <https://dentistlink.org> or
- Call or text: 844-888-5465

For more information on urgent dental problems, see attached (in English and Spanish).