

## Basics of Oral Health 5

# Make and Keep a Dental Appointment

Tonight, we are going to talk about going to the dentist and why it's important for you as parents to know how to find a dentist, schedule, and keep dental appointments for your child.

Here are a few questions to get us started:

Why is it important for your child to go to the dentist? *(wait for responses)*

*Answer:* Check for cavities, fix cavities, paint on fluoride, regular checkup, keep my child from getting cavities.

Some of your children may even ask, "When can I go to the dentist?" The dentist wants to keep your child's teeth healthy and strong. Regular visits to the dentist can help prevent cavities if they are caught early! It's recommended that children be seen by a dentist or medical provider by their first tooth or first birthday.

You may find it surprising to hear the "first visit by first tooth or first birthday message." And, you might even be told that your child doesn't need to see the dentist until he is three years old.

Starting regular dental visits early allows the dentist or medical provider to check your child's teeth for early signs of tooth decay or catch any cavities when they are still very small.

If you don't have a dentist for your child, tonight we will talk about ways to identify a dentist, schedule an appointment for your child, and prepare for the visit.

### Locate a Dentist or Dental Resources

We are fortunate to have dentists who are trained to work with children in our community. Have you heard of the Access to Baby and Child Dentistry (ABCD) program before? *(responses)*

The ABCD program is for children ages birth to six on Medicaid (ProviderOne). The ABCD dentist will see your child in his or her office. The dentist and staff have had training on how to care for young children.

Before you schedule an appointment with an ABCD dentist you need to enroll in the ABCD program. I can help you enroll in the ABCD program with our local ABCD coordinator *(pass out the ABCD enrollment forms to the families and fill out).*

### Supplies

- Copies of Local Community Dental Resources.
- Medicaid enrollment information.
- ABCD enrollment form/registration.
- Appointment reminder cards.
- Pens.
- "Reminder" handout.

## Make and Keep a Dental Appointment » continued

If your child is not on Medicaid we have local community dental clinics (*share list of clinics*) that will see your child. You do not need to enroll; you can call them directly.

Scheduling Your Child's Dental Appointment:

Once your child is enrolled in ABCD and has a dentist, you can call and schedule an appointment. Before you call to schedule decide what days and times work best for you. What are some other things that you want to think about when you schedule an appointment? (*wait for responses, ideas may include transportation, evening hours, getting off work*) Figuring these things out ahead of time can help make sure you can keep the appointment.

When you call to make the dental appointment, have the appointment reminder card (*pass out a card for each family*) ready to fill in. Or put it on your calendar. Post the card on the refrigerator as a reminder of the upcoming appointment.

Consider the time you need to get there. Do you need to take a bus or pick up your child from child care? You want to arrive about 5 to 10 minutes early for your child's dental appointment.

The dentist has scheduled time just for your child's visit. Make the appointment a priority.

What are some ways you can make the appointment go smoothly? (*responses*) Consider packing a bag with your child's favorite toy, books, a water cup, extra diapers and wipes, and anything else that can make the waiting time be pleasant.

During your child's checkup, the dentist and his or her team will look for early signs of decay, talk with you about how to brush and floss your child's teeth, and may paint fluoride on their teeth to help prevent cavities. If your child has a cavity or cavities they will schedule your child to come back for treatment appointment.

And one last thing—if something comes up and you need to cancel your child's appointment, call the dental office at least a full day (24 hours) ahead of the appointment. This is very important—some offices charge a fee when you don't cancel the appointment in advance.

### Discussion and Parent Practice Handout

- What type of support do you need to help schedule an appointment?
- What questions do you have about taking your child to the dentist?

# REMINDER

## Your Child Has a Dental Checkup Coming Up!

(Child's Name) \_\_\_\_\_

### HAS A DENTAL APPOINTMENT

On (date) \_\_\_\_\_ at (time) \_\_\_\_\_

With Dr. \_\_\_\_\_

(Address) \_\_\_\_\_

(Phone) \_\_\_\_\_

### **Remember to bring:** *(Circle all that apply)*

- Insurance card
- Photo ID
- Money for co-payment
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Reminders:**

- Arrive 15 minutes early to complete paperwork.
- Bring some small toys or a book for your child to play with during the waiting time.

