



KidsFirst

FEBRUARY 2019

A PUBLICATION OF TEXAS CHILDREN'S HEALTH PLAN CHIP AND STAR MEMBERS AGES 0-6 AND THEIR PARENTS.



Need a ride to the doctor?
Go to page 3 to find out how Texas Children's Health Plan can help!

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Take a look inside!

- 2 National Kids' Dental Health Month
- 3 Need a ride to the doctor?
- 3 Health risk warning: honey and infant botulism
- 4 Sweetheart strawberry bars
- 4 T-shirt contest

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National Kids' Dental Health Month and caring for your child's teeth

February is National Kids' Dental Health Month! Good dental health starts when your child is a baby. Many parents have a tough time judging how much dental care their kids need. They know they want to prevent cavities, but they don't always know the best way to do so. Here are some tips and guidelines.

When should kids start brushing their teeth?

Good dental care begins before a baby's first tooth appears. Just because you can't see the teeth doesn't mean they aren't there. Teeth actually begin to form in the second trimester of pregnancy. At birth, your baby has 20 primary teeth, some of which are fully developed in the jaw.

Here's when and how to care for those little choppers:

- Even before your baby starts teething, run a clean, damp washcloth over the gums to clear away harmful bacteria.
- Once your baby gets teeth, brush them with an infant toothbrush. Use water and a tiny bit of fluoride toothpaste (about the size of a grain of rice). Use fluoride toothpaste that carries the American Dental Association's (ADA) seal of acceptance. (If you are using baby toothpaste without the fluoride, keep it to the same amount because you still want to minimize any toothpaste that is swallowed.)
- Once your baby's teeth touch, you can begin flossing in between them.
- Around age 2, your child should learn to spit while brushing. Avoid giving your child water to swish and spit because this might make swallowing toothpaste more likely.
- Kids ages 3 and up should use only a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste.
- Always supervise kids younger than 8 while brushing, as they are more likely to swallow toothpaste.

Even babies can develop tooth decay if good feeding habits aren't practiced. Putting a baby to sleep with a bottle might be convenient, but can harm the baby's teeth. When the sugars from juice or milk remain on a baby's teeth for hours, they can eat away at the enamel, creating a condition known as bottle mouth. Pocked, pitted, or discolored front teeth are signs of bottle mouth. Kids with severe cases might develop cavities and need all of their front teeth pulled (permanent teeth will grow in later).

Parents and childcare providers should help young kids set specific times for drinking each day because sucking on a bottle throughout the day can be equally damaging to young teeth. Babies as young as 6 months are encouraged to switch from a bottle to a sippy cup (with a straw or hard spout). By 12 months of age, they'll have the motor skills and coordination to use the cup on their own.

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When should kids see a dentist?

The ADA recommends that children see a dentist by their first birthday. At this first visit, the dentist will explain proper brushing and flossing techniques and do a modified exam while your baby sits on your lap.

These visits can help find problems early and help kids get used to visiting the dentist so they'll have less fear about going as they get older. Consider taking your child to a dentist who specializes in treating kids. Pediatric dentists are trained to handle the wide range of issues associated with kids' dental health. They also know when to refer you to a different type of specialist, such as an orthodontist to correct an overbite or an oral surgeon for jaw realignment.

If a child seems to be at risk for cavities or other problems, the dentist may start applying topical fluoride even before all teeth come in (this also can be done in the pediatrician's office). Fluoride hardens the tooth enamel, helping to ward off the most common childhood oral disease — dental cavities (also called dental caries).

To read more about dental health for kids, visit <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/healthy.html?WT.ac=p-ra>.



Need help getting to your child's doctor's appointment?

No problem! Here's how you can get a ride at no cost to your family:

- If your child is a STAR member, you will need to call Medicaid Transportation Management toll-free at 1-855-687-4786 to arrange a ride. If this is not the best option for you, you can call Texas Children's Health Plan STAR Member Services at 1-866-959-2555 and ask for a gas reimbursement, up to \$20, if a family member, friend, or neighbor drives you and your child to the doctor.
- If your child is a CHIP member, call Texas Children's Health Plan CHIP Member Services at 1-866-959-6555 to arrange a ride or ask for a gas reimbursement, up to \$20, if a family member, friend, or neighbor drives you and your child to the doctor.

Health risk warning: Children less than 12 months should not have honey

It is very important not to feed honey to your child who is 12 months or younger. Honey can contain spores of a bacteria that can cause a severe illness in infants (children less than 12 months), called botulism. If an infant breathes in or eats/drinks an item containing these spores, they can become very sick. This is because infants do not have enough mature intestinal flora to fight the bacteria.

Cases of infant botulism in Texas are rare. But since August 2018, the Texas Department of State Health Services has identified 4 patients who were treated for infant botulism after using a honey pacifier from Mexico. To stop your child from getting sick with infant botulism, do not give an infant honey or pacifiers made with honey or other food products.

Infant botulism is a serious illness that requires urgent medical attention. Symptoms of infant botulism include:

- Constipation
- Poor feeding and/or weak sucking
- Weakness
- Drooping eyelids
- Loss of head control
- Difficulty breathing

If you think your child has eaten honey and is showing any of these symptoms, call 9-1-1 or take your child to the nearest emergency room.

Source: Texas Department of State Health Services



Sweetheart strawberry bars

Ingredients

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup rolled oats
- ½ cup butter, softened
- ⅓ cup light brown sugar
- ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- ¾ cup strawberry jam

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350° F.
2. In a large bowl, mix everything together except the strawberry jam.
3. Measure out 2 cups of this mixture. Leave the rest in the bowl, and set it aside.
4. Take the 2 cups of the mixture and press it into the bottom of a square (8" x 8") pan coated with shortening or nonstick spray. You can use your hands or a spoon. Make sure you cover the entire bottom of the pan!
5. Using a large spoon, spread the strawberry jam on top of the mixture in the pan. Spread it evenly all over.
6. Take the mixture that was left in the bowl, and spread it over the strawberry jam. Press it down lightly.
7. Bake for 25 minutes. Remove the pan from the oven, and allow it to cool for at least 15 minutes.
8. Cut the bars into 12 squares to eat and share!

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Get ready, get set, draw!

We want your child to enter the **Texas Children's Health Plan Annual T-shirt Design Contest!**

Your child won't want to miss the chance to be the winning artist for our 2019 T-shirt Design Contest. Every member who enters the contest will get a gift. We'll pick the winners in spring 2019. The winners' designs will be printed on a Texas Children's Health Plan T-shirt! The winners will also get prizes and have his or her drawings published in future editions of our newsletters.

Entries should be sent in on white, unlined letter-sized paper. You can use crayons, markers, pencils, or paints.

The deadline for entry is April 15, 2019.

Make sure your child's drawing includes our name, Texas Children's Health Plan, on it. Don't forget to include your child's name, age, and Texas Children's Health Plan Member ID number with each entry.



Please mail entries to:
Texas Children's Health Plan
Member Engagement Department
P.O. Box 301011, WLS 8366
Houston, TX 77230-1011