

Information for ECC Collaborative Partners

Early Childhood Caries (ECC) is any tooth decay in a child under 6 years of age. While some children may only have one tooth that is decayed, and some may have multiple teeth that are decayed (as shown in the picture to the right) it is important to understand that **tooth decay in childhood is not normal and can be prevented.**



Early Childhood Caries is a devastating problem in young children. Not only can it cause pain and loss of teeth, but it also affects self esteem, speech development, nutrition, and school attendance. Preventing ECC is difficult because dietary habits help contribute to this disease, and because young children don't always make it in to the dentist at an early age. So when they do make it to the dentist, often times it is too late. YOU can help by referring children to the dentist, applying fluoride varnish to children's teeth, and providing positive oral health messages to parents.

The goal of the IHS Early Childhood Caries Collaborative is to reduce tooth decay in 0-5 year-olds by 25% by the end of Fiscal Year 2015. ECC is not just a dental problem—it is a health problem, **and only with your help can we reduce tooth decay and have happy, smiling children in the next few years!**

Who are the ECC Collaborative Partners?

ECC is a health problem, and many disciplines and groups have stepped up to take an active role in support of the ECC Collaborative.

- Community Health Representatives (CHRs)
- Dental Programs
- Head Start
- Medical Providers
- Nurses
- Nutritionists
- Pharmacists
- Public Health Nurses
- Tribal Health Boards
- Women, Infants, and Children's Program (WIC)

All it takes is for one person to get this started, and it doesn't have to be dental staff. Learn more about the program on our website. Light the fire and be the champion in your community.

Flip the page to learn more about what you can do...

**Together, we CAN
make a difference!**

Go to <http://www.doh.ihs.gov/ecc>



What can you do to help?



1. Oral Health Assessment—You can do oral health assessments on young children to look for white, chalky spots, brown spots in grooves, and cavities (holes in teeth). When doing a screening, brush teeth with gauze and position the child as shown in this picture (called “knee to knee”). Below are some pictures that can help you. If you see any obvious cavities, refer the child to the dental clinic.

White spot lesions

Apply Fluoride Varnish



Early cavities (brown spots)

Apply Fluoride Varnish
Refer to Dental Clinic



Severe decay (holes in teeth)

Apply Fluoride Varnish
Refer to Dental Clinic



2. Apply fluoride varnish—Start by getting fluoride varnish, gauze, and gloves. Wipe teeth with gauze and brush varnish over all of the teeth, inside and out. Don't worry about getting it on the gums. It should only take a minute or less to apply varnish. Fluoride varnish should be applied 3-4 times each year to help prevent tooth decay and to stop existing decay from getting worse.



3. Provide Positive Oral Health Messages—Take the time to talk to parents about the following:

- Teach families to lift the lip and look for chalky white or brown spots. They should go to the dentist if they see these.
- Show parents how to brush their child's teeth and remind them to brush twice daily with a small smear of fluoride toothpaste beginning when the first tooth erupts.
- Encourage families to put their baby to bed without a bottle and wean them from the bottle at 12 months of age.
- Encourage families to feed their baby a healthy diet and limit sweets and sodas.
- Provide fluoride varnish treatments 3-4 times every year to help prevent cavities.
- Refer babies to the dentist as soon as the first tooth erupts.
- Tell families to ask their dentist about Mighty Mouth sealants and fillings to help prevent cavities.

To learn more and download educational materials, please visit our website at www.doh.ihs.gov/ecc.