



Brush Up on Oral Health

October 2018

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Did You Know?

- You can [subscribe](#) to *Brush Up on Oral Health*. The tip sheet will be emailed to you each month.
- You can find [back issues](#) of *Brush Up on Oral Health* on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center website.



THINK TEETH

Medicaid and CHIP cover children's dental services – including teeth cleanings, fluoride, sealants and fillings.

[Learn More](#)

 InsureKidsNow.gov

Medicaid and CHIP

Medicaid is a state-run health insurance program for children from families with low incomes. Many, but not all, state Medicaid programs cover pregnant women, individuals with disabilities, and older adults. The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) is also a state-run health insurance program. It is for children from families with incomes too high for them to qualify for Medicaid but too low for them to afford private insurance.

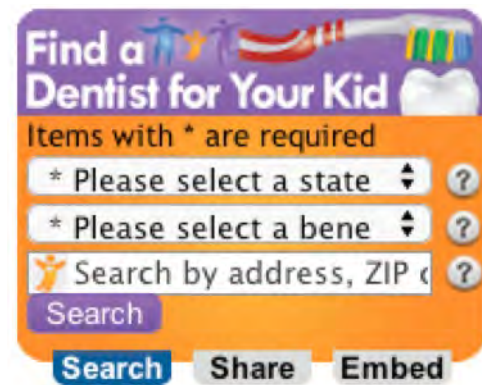
This issue of *Brush Up on Oral Health* describes Medicaid and CHIP and explains why the programs are important. It includes tips Head Start staff can use to help parents find a dental office or clinic that accepts Medicaid and CHIP. A recipe for a healthy snack that can be made in the Head Start classroom or at home is also included.

The Importance of Medicaid and CHIP

Medicaid and CHIP pay for oral health care for children enrolled in these programs. Without these two programs, many children would not receive the oral health care that they need. Dental benefits typically include teeth cleanings, check-ups, X-rays, fluoride treatments, dental sealants, and fillings. Information on oral health coverage through Medicaid or CHIP in your state can be found on InsureKidsNow.gov, under "Find Coverage for Your Family." Under the heading, choose "Select Your State" and then "View State."

Tips to Help Parents Find Dental Offices and Clinics That Accept Medicaid and CHIP

- Below are strategies for Head Start staff to help parents find a dental office or clinic in their community that accepts children enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP. Show parents how to use the [Find a Dentist](#) search tool on the InsureKidsNow.gov website. The tool identifies dental offices and clinics that accept children enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP. For each office or clinic, the tool shows if new patients are being accepted and the languages spoken. The list is updated every three months to keep the information accurate. A widget from InsureKidsNow.gov can also be placed on your Head Start program's social media page (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) or embedded on your program's website. The widget is located at the bottom left on the InsureKidsNow.gov's [home page](#).
- **Encourage parents to ask others to recommend a dental office or clinic.** Have parents ask their pediatrician, family physician, pharmacist, and other parents to recommend a dental office or clinic. In many states, a dental insurance company or managed care organization may have a contract with the Medicaid program to pay for oral health care. If a child enrolled in Medicaid is covered by this kind of company or organization, encourage parents to call the company's or organization's member services department and ask for a referral to a dental office or clinic.
- **Partner with organizations in your state.** A good place to start identifying potential partners to contact is your state's Head Start state collaboration office (HSSCO). HSSCOs help develop partnerships between Head Start agencies and other state organizations that provide services to benefit children and families enrolled in Head Start. Other potential partners include the state Office of Oral Health, dental association, Head Start association, and oral health coalition. These organizations can help programs create new and innovative ways to find and access dental offices and clinics that accept children enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP. For example, through a partnership agreement with the Pennsylvania Head Start Association, each of the state's eight insurance companies that pay for Medicaid and CHIP services have established liaisons to work with Head Start staff and families on oral health-related issues. The liaisons conduct outreach to parents and oral health professionals, help families access care, and provide case-management services.
- **Develop a relationship with the Medicaid and CHIP dental contact in your state.** These [contacts](#) can refer you to the Medicaid and CHIP dental contacts in your state to answer questions about coverage and identify dental offices and clinics that accept children enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP. Each state's [dental hygienist liaison](#) can also help Head Start staff get in touch with their Medicaid or CHIP dental contact.



Cook's Corner: Baked Sweet Potato Sticks

Here is a delicious healthy snack that children can make in a Head Start classroom or at home with their families.

Ingredients

- 4 small sweet potatoes
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 1½ teaspoon chili powder (optional)
- 1½ teaspoon salt



Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F.
2. Cut each sweet potato into sticks that are 1 inch wide.
3. Mix the oil, chili powder, and 1 teaspoon of the salt in a small bowl.
4. Place the sweet potato sticks on a cookie sheet and brush with the oil mixture.
5. Bake the sweet potato sticks for 20 to 25 minutes, turning occasionally, until they are golden brown and tender.
6. Remove the pan from the oven and sprinkle the sweet potato sticks with the remaining salt.

Makes 6 servings

Safety tip: An adult should slice the ingredients and supervise the use of the oven.

Contact Us

The National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness welcomes your feedback on this issue, as well as your suggestions for topics for future issues. Please forward your comments to health@ecetta.info or call 866-763-6481.

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School readiness begins with health!



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