



Commonly Asked Questions About Childrens' Dental Needs



Q: When does my child need to see a dentist for the first time?

When the child gets their first tooth or has their first birthday, whichever comes first.

Q: How often should I take my child to the dentist?

Your child should see the dentist every 6 months for check-ups, or as recommended by their dentist.

Q: How many cleanings per year does Medi-Cal Dental cover for my child?

Medi-Cal Dental covers cleanings and check-ups 2 times per year for members under age 21, along with a wide range of dental procedures. See what else is covered: <https://smilecalifornia.org/covered-services/>

Q: Are my child's baby teeth important? Since they fall out, does it matter if they get cavities?

A child will likely have most or all of their baby teeth, also known as primary teeth, in place by age 3. Not only are primary teeth important for chewing and aesthetics, but they also help to make sure there is enough room to guide the permanent teeth into place when they are ready. Primary teeth are also important for development of speech and for development of the jawbone and muscles.

Q: What age do my child's permanent teeth start coming in?

Children will generally start to get their first permanent molars around 6 years old. Most or all of the permanent teeth are generally erupted by around age 13.

Q: Should my child get sealants on their permanent molars?

Sealants are a proven way to help prevent cavities. The sealant material fills in small cracks and grooves in the molars where cavities usually start, making them an effective way to help your child stay cavity-free.

Q: Should my child have their wisdom teeth removed?

This depends on how the wisdom teeth are forming, whether there is enough room in the mouth to accommodate them, or whether they are causing pain or other issues. Your child's dentist will be able to recommend whether or not they should be removed.

Q: How can I find a dentist who works well with my child, or a dentist who offers sedation or other specialty procedures?

If you have private dental insurance, a good place to start is by calling the phone number on the back of the dental insurance card. The representative can assist with finding a dentist to meet your child's needs.

If you have Medi-Cal Dental, you can find a dentist by visiting the Provider Directory Search Tool at https://dental.dhcs.ca.gov/Members/Medi_Cal_Dental/Find_A_Dentist/DentalProviderDirectorySearch or you can call the Telephone Service Center Phone Line at 1-800-322-6384.

If you live in Sacramento County, your Medi-Cal Dental plan may be what is called a Dental Managed Care Plan (more information found here: <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/dental-medi-cal-managed-care-plan-transition/>). These plans are Liberty, HealthNet and California Dental Network (DentaQuest). If your child has one of these plans, your child may already be assigned to a specific dental provider. If you do not know

which provider your child is assigned to, you may contact the plan directly. If you do not know which plan your child has, you may call Health Care Options to inquire: 1-800-430-4263. If you need to request a specialty referral, or if you would like to switch your child's assigned dental provider, you may call the plan directly to request assistance. The contact information for each plan is listed at the end of this document. You may also contact your child's ACRC Service Coordinator for further assistance. ACRC has a Dental Coordinator who may be able to provide further assistance.

Q: What can I do to help my child have a better experience at the dentist?

There are some things that can help make children more comfortable when visiting the dentist. Before coming in for the first appointment, ask if there is an opportunity for the child to come see the office, explore, and meet the staff. Ask the staff to show them around and let them touch some dental tools, sit in a dental chair, etc. It can also be helpful to practice "examining" your child's teeth at home with a toothbrush while they lay in a reclined position. For dental appointments, it may be helpful to bring preferred comfort items such as iPads, headphones, a favorite toy or even a weighted blanket. If your child has sensory needs, make sure the staff is aware and can accommodate any special requests such as dimming the lights, or providing a quieter waiting area away from the main waiting room. Many pediatric offices are happy to accommodate specific needs. Contact your dental plan or your ACRC Service Coordinator if you need help locating a pediatric dental office who can meet your child's needs.

Q: What should I do if my child has a dental emergency?

If your child has an established dentist, call to make an appointment as soon as possible. If your child does not have a regular dentist or the dental office is closed, call the number on the back of your dental insurance card, or call the Medi-Cal Dental Telephone Service Center at **1-800-322-6384**, for help finding one. If your child has a Sacramento County Medi-Cal Managed Care Dental Plan, call the Dental Plan directly for assistance.

For dental problems such as severe pain, swelling, fever, abscess or other signs of infection, the child should be seen as soon as possible, either through their dentist, physician, or through urgent care or the emergency room.

Q: What if I need a translator or transportation to attend dental appointments?

Medi-Cal can help with both. Medi-Cal covers two types of rides: **Non-Medical Transportation (NMT)** and **Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT)**. Learn more here: <https://smilecalifornia.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/SmileCA-Transportation-Services-Flyer-ENG.pdf>. Medi-Cal can also provide translation assistance. Call the Telephone Service Center Phone Line at 1-800-322-6384 to request these services. If your child has a Sacramento County Medi-Cal Managed Care Dental Plan, you may call the specific plan to request transportation and translation services. You may also contact your child's ACRC Service Coordinator for further assistance.

*Below is the contact information for the Sacramento County Medi-Cal Dental Managed Care plans. If you are unsure of which plan you have, call **Health Care Options at 1-800-430-4263**, press 2 and follow the prompts.*

- **California Dental Network (DentaQuest)** Phone: (833) 479-1984 TTY/TDD 711
Provider Network: <https://www.dentaquest.com/en/members/california-medicaid-dental-coverage/medi-cal-dmc#accordion-c200b89a0e-item-dac722d891>
- **Health Net Dental** Phone: (877) 550-3868 TTY/TDD: (877) 550-3868 (TTY 711)
Provider Network: https://www.healthnet.com/content/healthnet/en_us/members/medi-cal/dental.html
- **Liberty Dental Plan** Phone: (877) 550-3875 TTY/TDD (877) 855-8039
Provider Network: <https://www.libertydentalplan.com/LIBERTY-Dental-Plan-of-California/Medi-Cal/Medi-Cal-Dentist-Search-1.aspx>