

Oral Health and School Readiness Fact Sheet

All children enrolled in Medi-Cal have dental coverage, but many parents and guardians may not realize their child has dental benefits or know how to access dental care.

A Child's Oral Health Affects Their Whole Body

Children with poor oral health may:

- Miss more school and receive lower grades than children who don't.
- Develop an infection or other serious health condition.
- Have trouble eating, speaking, and even sleeping due to pain.
- Have low self-esteem.



Dental Check-Ups Are Important for School Readiness

- Establishing good dental care habits at home at a young age is important. However, it is critical to educate families that home care alone is not a substitute for a dental check-up.
- Healthy teeth not only help children eat, speak and sleep better, but also to perform better in school.
- According to a USC study, children with tooth pain were more likely to miss school days and four times more likely to have a low grade-point average when compared to children without oral pain.

The good news is that tooth decay is preventable!

The Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment Requirement

- To make sure children are ready for school, California law requires that children have a dental assessment by **May 31** in either kindergarten or first grade, whichever is their first year in public school.



Medi-Cal Offers Comprehensive Preventive and Restorative Dental Benefits to Both Children and Adults

- Members under the age of 21 are covered for two dental check-ups and cleanings a year.
- Members 21 years of age or older are covered for one dental check-up and cleaning a year.

Connecting Members to a Medi-Cal Dentist

1. Visit [SmileCalifornia.org](https://www.smilecalifornia.org).
2. Click on the orange "Find A Dentist" button at the top of the page.
3. Search for Medi-Cal dental providers in their area that are accepting new patients.



For additional information on the Medi-Cal Dental Program covered services and oral health resources for every life stage, visit [SmileCalifornia.org/School-Readiness](https://www.smilecalifornia.org/School-Readiness).