

## NEW CALIFORNIA LAW MANDATES DENTAL CHECK-UPS

To make sure your child is ready for school, California law now requires that your child have a dental check-up by May 31 of his/her first school year. Dental evaluations that have occurred within the 12 months before your child enters school also meet this requirement. Your school will give you the required form to take with you when your child has his/her check-up.

If you cannot obtain a dental check-up for your child, you can apply for your child to be excused from the requirement by completing the bottom portion of the form and marking the reasons your child could not obtain the check-up.

You can get more copies of the necessary forms at your child's school, by clicking on the link provided on this website or by going to the California Department of Education's Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/>.

The following information, questions and answers were taken from the California Dental Association Web site, [www.cda.org](http://www.cda.org) and is available in several languages.

Here is important advice to help your child stay healthy:

- Take your child to the dentist twice a year.
- Choose healthy foods for the entire family. Fresh foods are usually the healthiest foods.
- Brush teeth at least twice a day with toothpaste that contains fluoride.
- Limit sodas and candy. Soda and candy contain a lot of sugar, which causes cavities and replaces important nutrients in your child's diet. Soda and candy also contribute to weight problems, which may lead to other diseases, such as diabetes. The less your child eats candy and drinks soda, the better!

### **What should I do when I receive the notice of this new oral health requirement from my child's school?**

If you have a dentist, and your child has not received an exam within the last 12 months, call and schedule an appointment for an examination. If your child has seen the dentist within the last year, call your dentist's office and ask how they are handling this requirement and what you must do for the dentist to complete the required form based on your child's last regular exam. They may ask you to mail or fax the required form to them. They may tell you they have extra copies and will complete it and send it to you.

Remember that you have until May 31 to return the required form to your child's school. Your dentist's office may be handling this request for many patients and may need to space out scheduling appointments for these exams and completing the paperwork, so as not to overwhelm their office all at one time!

**If you do not have a dentist, now is the perfect time to find one!** The California Dental Association can assist you in finding a dentist at [www.cda.org/finddentist](http://www.cda.org/finddentist).

- ✓ You can obtain assistance in finding a Medi-Cal/Denti-Cal insurance dentist by calling 1-800-322-6384 or visit the Denti-Cal website at <http://www.denti-cal.ca.gov/>.
- ✓ You can obtain assistance in finding a Healthy Families insurance dentist by calling 1-800-880-5305 or visiting their website at [www.healthyfamilies.ca.gov/hfhome.asp](http://www.healthyfamilies.ca.gov/hfhome.asp).
- ✓ Additionally, you can search for a community clinic in your area by clicking on this link: [www.cda.org/patient\\_&\\_community\\_resources/community\\_oral\\_health](http://www.cda.org/patient_&_community_resources/community_oral_health) and looking under "Dental clinics."

**My child does not have any form of dental insurance and I don't think I can afford a dental exam for my child. What should I do?**

Many children who are not covered by a commercial insurance plan may be eligible for health benefits through the Medi-Cal program or the Healthy Families programs. Both Medi-Cal and Healthy Families automatically include dental care.

To find out if your child can enroll in Medi-Cal (Denti-Cal), contact your local social service agency. For more information, please visit [www.dhs.ca.gov/mcs/medi-Calhome/CountyListing1.htm](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/mcs/medi-Calhome/CountyListing1.htm). Your school may also be able to refer you to a local resource to help you enroll your child in the Medi-Cal (Denti-Cal) program.

If your child does not qualify for Medi-Cal, he/she may qualify for Healthy Families, which is another government program that covers dental care. For more information, please call 1-800-880-5305 or visit their website at [www.healthyfamilies.ca.gov/hfhome.asp](http://www.healthyfamilies.ca.gov/hfhome.asp).

**My child does not qualify for either Medi-Cal (Denti-Cal) or Healthy Families, what do I do?**

Remember, this requirement is meant to help your child get the dental care he or she needs to be healthy and ready for school. It is a great opportunity to learn about your child's dental health! Because many dentists recognize the importance of this first step, they may be willing to do a basic evaluation, called a dental screening, for your child free of charge, as a public service. Your child's school, your local health department or your local dental society may be able to help you find a dentist who has agreed to complete dental screenings free of charge. You may also be able to get a dental check-up for your child at low, or no cost through a local community clinic. For more information on a community clinic go to [www.cda.org/patient & community resources/community oral health](http://www.cda.org/patient & community resources/community oral health) and looking under "Dental clinics."

Additionally, some schools may arrange for a dental screening program to come to their school. If your child has the opportunity to participate in one of these screening programs, be sure to sign the permission slip provided by the school and look for the findings/recommendation form that your child brings home. This will tell you if the dental professional who completed the screening found that your child has dental problems that need attention, or whether your child appears healthy at the time of the screening. It's important to remember that a dental screening is just a quick visual look at a child's mouth and cannot replace a thorough dental examination. All children who receive dental screenings are recommended to get a complete dental examination by a dentist, to make sure that they are healthy and they receive the care they need to stay healthy.

**I am just not able to get a dental check-up for my child. What should I do?**

The law recognizes that under some circumstances, it may not be possible to get the required dental check-up for your child. In this case, you may have your child excused from the requirement by filling out the bottom portion of the form you received from the school.

To have your child excused, this portion of the form asks you to identify what prevented you from getting the dental check-up for your child. This information is very important, because it will help community leaders and policy makers decide what steps must be taken to improve access to oral health care for children. Mark the box that most closely describes the reason you could not get a dental check-up for your child and return the form to your child's school by May 31 of the school year.

**REMEMBER, YOUR CHILD IS NOT HEALTHY AND READY FOR SCHOOL IF HE OR SHE HAS POOR DENTAL HEALTH!**