

BABY TEETH MATTER: INTEGRATING ORAL HEALTH IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

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Abstract

Promoting optimal oral health from pregnancy through early childhood is incredibly important. Oral health promotion can be integrated in a variety of settings, such as child care and health care. There are many strategies that can be implemented in various environments to promote tooth healthy practices and behaviors.

With a focus on integrating oral health care as a component of pediatric well child care, Colorado has been implementing a training and technical assistance program for pediatric and family medicine providers for over ten years, called Cavity Free at Three. We have also started integrating the Cavity Free Kids classroom curriculum into child care settings across our state.

Through integrating oral health prevention in child care settings, as well as with pediatric providers, increased access to education, screening, and referral to dental providers can improve early childhood oral health.

Background

Dental disease is the leading chronic disease of Colorado children, even though it is completely preventable. Oral health affects overall health and early childhood cavities can lead to chronic pain, problems eating and sleeping, and missed school. In Colorado, a number of interdisciplinary efforts and programs have been implemented to address this problem.

For young children, oral health interventions can be integrated in settings where young children and families participate regularly. In Colorado, we utilize these five basics to increase awareness and knowledge of the importance of oral health and the connection to overall health.

- 1 Baby Teeth Are Important!
- 2 Water for Thirst
- 3 Tooth Healthy Foods
- 4 Brush, Floss, Swish
- 5 Going to the Dentist

Objectives

- Increase knowledge and awareness of the importance of early childhood oral health
- Increase the number of early childhood programs implementing daily toothbrushing routines
- Increase the number of medical providers who incorporate preventive oral health services into prenatal visits and well child checks for young children



"This training was super helpful and motivating. I received all of the tools we need to implement oral health best practices in our program."
— Colorado Springs Early Childhood Program

Results

- All 110 early childhood professionals who attended our training agreed or strongly agreed they were prepared to implement oral health best practices and activities in their programs
- 44 early childhood classrooms implement daily toothbrushing routines
- Over 5,000 medical, dental and other partners have been trained by Cavity Free at Three
- Prenatal CF3 sites demonstrated a four-fold increase in screening and referral rates for dental care

Results



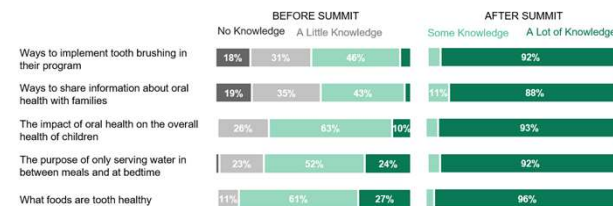
Four by Three
4 FLUORIDE VARNISHES BY AGE 3 REDUCES CAVITIES

Eastside Clinic increased the % of pregnant patients that received dental services to 26%, surpassing the goal set by the clinic. Since January 2017, 373 of the 1,415 pregnant patients seen received dental services.

Westside Clinic increased the % of pregnant patients that received dental services to 21%, however, there is still work to be done to meet the goal set by the clinic. Since January 2018, 355 of the 1,684 pregnant patients seen received dental services.



44 classrooms implemented daily toothbrushing routines impacting more than 350 children



Conclusions

- Training is effective at teaching implementation strategies for oral health practices and activities in early childhood settings
- Toothbrushing procedures are applicable to multiple age groups
- Fluoride varnish application provided in a medical setting can reduce early childhood caries by 37%

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