KEEPING YOUR CHILD HEALTHY THROUGH PREVENTATIVE CARE

To view online modules, visit [www.esc20.net/headstart](http://www.esc20.net/headstart) and click on the “Parent Courses” tab.

**Importance of Prevention**

When it comes to protecting your child’s health, prevention is key. Preschool children are going through periods of rapid growth and development and may appear healthy on the outside, but without routine physical exams, labwork, and dental check-ups the true state of your child’s health cannot be accessed. Being proactive with regards to your child’s physical and dental health can help set them on the road to lifelong wellness.

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### Medical Insurance

- Having medical insurance is extremely important for you and your family. Accidents or unexpected health issues can occur at any time leaving your family with large medical expenses if you do not have insurance.
- If you do not currently have insurance (Medicaid, CHIP, or Private Insurance through your work) for yourself or your children, you can learn more about the different benefit programs available in Texas at the following link: [https://www.yourtexasbenefits.com/Learn/Home](https://www.yourtexasbenefits.com/Learn/Home)
- For information specific to medical insurance for children, visit:  – [https://www.mychildrensmedicaid.org/](https://www.mychildrensmedicaid.org/)  – [https://chipmedicaid.org/](https://chipmedicaid.org/)

### Establishing a Medical and Dental Home

- A Medical Home is a model for providing healthcare that focuses on ensuring children receive continuous, accessible, and comprehensive medical care. This is a family-centered approach focused on the child and the development of a relationship between the physician and the family.
- The focus of a medical home is preventing illness and detecting health concerns early on.
- Similar to the concept of finding a Medical Home for your child’s healthcare needs, it is important to establish a Dental Home to care for your child’s teeth. The dentist will work in collaboration with your child’s pediatrician to promote the overall health of your child.
- If you do not have a Medical or Dental Home for your child, ask the Head Start staff for a referral to providers within your community.

### Medical and Dental Check-Ups

**THE MEDICAL CHECK-UP WILL INCLUDE:**

- A review of your child’s medical and developmental history, a physical exam, and age-appropriate screenings, immunizations, and laboratory tests.
- During the appointment the physician will also provide you with information for the health and safety of your growing child.
- The medical check-up is the ideal time to ask any questions you have regarding your child’s growth, development, and overall well-being.

**THE DENTAL CHECK-UP WILL INCLUDE:**

- Examination of the teeth, jaw, and gums for cavities, signs of tooth decay, and any oral concerns. Teeth will be cleaned and polished and a fluoride varnish will be applied.
- Parents will be requested to provide a medical and dental history, be taught proper dental hygiene for preschool children, and receive guidance on how to prevent tooth decay and cavities.
- After the medical and dental check-ups are complete, make sure to follow-up on any concerns addressed during the visit, including referrals to specialists. The Head Start staff can help you identify and connect with possible community resources.

### Preventative Health

Providing your child with a healthy, balanced diet is important for your child’s growth and development. Good nutrition is also important for supporting brain development and learning during the preschool years.

- Parents can visit [ChooseMyPlate.Gov](https://www.choosemyplate.gov) website for recommendations on providing their child with a well-balanced diet.

**HELP YOUR CHILD ESTABLISH GOOD DENTAL HYGIENE WITH THE FOLLOWING TIPS:**

- Help your child with brushing their teeth twice per day (after meals).
  - Children over the age of 2 should begin using a toothpaste that contains fluoride. Children should only use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste.
  - Help your child with flossing his/her teeth daily.
- Limit consumption of foods and beverages that are high in sugar and acid, such as soda, sports drinks, fruit juices, and sugary candy and treats (gummies, fruit chews, caramel, ice cream).
- The bacteria causing tooth decay can be transferred between people. Teach your child not to share cups, water bottles, or utensils.