

Transcript: Preventative Care for Children

About this course:

Perhaps as a parent you wonder if your child is healthy and following a normal pattern for growth and development. You may question if you are providing your child with the nutrition they need to grow. You may also want to know how to best care for your child's teeth. This course will provide you with information on the importance of regular medical and dental exams and how to promote the overall health of your child with routine care and good nutrition.

What will you learn?

You will learn:

- What a Medical and Dental Home are and how they benefit your child.
- What the Texas Health Steps Program is.
- What a medical and dental check-up involves and the importance of routine care.
- What the impact of nutrition is on brain development and learning.
- What the importance of dental hygiene is in overall health.

Preventative Health

When it comes to protecting your child's health, prevention is the key. Preventative healthcare, such as regular medical check-ups and dental exams, can help detect health concerns early on and possibly before you notice any physical signs or symptoms.

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 known.

As a parent, being proactive in your child's physical and dental health can help set them on the road to lifelong wellness.

Applying for health 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 very large medical expenses if you do not have insurance.

Preventative care is extremely important for your growing child and for adults as well. Health insurance will cover the costs of your child's regular medical and dental check-ups and immunizations.

If you do not currently have insurance such as Medicaid, CHIP, or Private Insurance through your work for yourself or your children, you can learn more about possible options and the different benefit programs available

in Texas at the following website:

<https://www.yourtexasbenefits.com/Learn/Home>

For information specific to medical insurance for children, visit the following websites:

<https://www.mychildrensmedicaid.org/>

<https://chipmedicaid.org/>

Texas Health Steps

Texas Health Steps is Medicaid's comprehensive medical services program provided to children from birth through 20 years of age.

The focus of Texas Health Steps is to provide preventative care in the form of regular medical and dental check-ups along with age-appropriate screenings and immunizations.

Texas Health Steps uses a Periodicity Schedule, this ensures children receive ongoing preventative care and age-appropriate screenings and immunizations throughout their child and adolescent years.

The Texas Health Steps program requires children from age 3 to 20 years of age to receive annual medical check-ups. Younger children, from birth through 2 years of age, must receive multiple check-ups with in the year.

NOTE: Even if you are not part of the Texas Health Steps program, annual preventative medical check-ups are recommended for all children.

What is a Medical Home?

A Medical Home is a comprehensive health care delivery model where the patient develops relationships with health care providers who deliver comprehensive medical care to patients.

This family-centered approach focuses on the child and the development of a relationship between the physician and the family. It is through the ongoing relationship with the Medical Home that the physician gets to know the child better and has a thorough understanding of the child's unique healthcare needs. Families begin to develop trust in the provider and feel comfortable discussing medical concerns and seeking out medical care when appropriate.

The Medical Home helps to coordinate care for your child by connecting the family with community resources and medical specialists when needed.

The primary focus of a medical home is to prevent illness and detect health concerns early. This is achieved through annual wellness check-ups, age-appropriate screenings, immunizations, and lab work.

The goal of having a Medical Home is to treat the whole child. In addition to addressing concerns related to physical health, parents should discuss concerns regarding behavioral, emotional, and mental health of your child.

If you do not have a Medical Home for your child, ask the Head Start staff for a list of pediatricians in your community.

Medical Check-Ups

General medical check-ups to assess the overall wellbeing of your child should be done on a yearly basis from ages 3 through 20 years. The Texas Health Steps Program recommends medical check-ups be provided at the child's medical home.

The medical check-up will include:

A comprehensive medical and developmental history, a physical exam, and age-appropriate screenings, immunizations, and laboratory tests.

During the appointment the physician will also discuss with you information for the health and safety of your growing child. This includes: the appropriate use of car seats, injury prevention, and the importance of eating a healthy diet and engaging in daily physical activity.

The medical check-up is the ideal time to visit with the physician and ask any questions you have regarding your child's growth, development, and overall well-being.

Consider keeping an on-going list throughout the year of questions you want to discuss with your pediatrician at the next medical check-up. This can be helpful to ensure you address all of your concerns and questions at the appointment.

After the medical check-up is complete, make sure to follow-up with any medical concerns that the pediatrician addressed during the visit, including referrals to specialists.

Immunizations

Immunizations are one of the best ways to keep your child healthy and protect them from illness.

Your pediatrician will provide your child with age-appropriate immunizations at their medical check-up.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or CDC provides a recommended immunization schedule for children. This schedule indicates the age that children should receive each of the recommended vaccines.

The immunization schedule can be viewed on the CDC's website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/easy-to-read/child.html>

The purpose of immunizations are to protect your child from vaccine preventable diseases. Diseases that used to cause severe illness, such as polio, measles, and diphtheria can now be prevented with the use of vaccines.

Vaccination costs are covered by Medicaid and the Texas Health Steps Program. Most private insurance companies will also cover the cost of age-appropriate vaccinations.

In Texas, children are required to show evidence that they are current on the required immunizations in order to enroll in public school.

The Head Start staff will review your child's immunization record to make sure it is complete and up-to-date.

If immunizations are needed, the Head Start staff can help connect you with local immunization clinics where the vaccinations can be obtained.

If you have any questions or concerns about having your child receive immunizations, discuss these concerns with your pediatrician.

Lab Work

Lab work is also a part of the annual medical check-up for your child. The Head Start Program needs documentation that children enrolled in the program have had lab work screening completed for lead and iron deficiency anemia.

Lead Screening:

At your child's medical check-up, it is important to discuss lead screening.

A lead screening will detect the amount of lead in a child's blood and is required to be done at 12 months of age and repeated at 24 months.

If the screening has not been done or if there is no record of it having been done then the lead screening should be done for children from 3 to 6 years of age.

Lead screenings are vitally important because lead poisoning can impair both growth and development in children. This impairment may result in difficulties with hearing, speech, and learning. It is important to note that many children with lead poisoning may not show any signs or symptoms.

If your child tests positive for lead in the blood, the pediatrician can determine a treatment plan and help to identify possible places in your child's environment where they may be exposed to lead.

For more information on possible sources of lead in your child's environment visit the online Head Start course "Health and Safety at Home"

Iron Deficiency Anemia Screening

To determine if a child has iron deficiency anemia, bloodwork is done to measure hemoglobin or hematocrit levels in the blood.

If the body does not have enough iron, red blood cells do not develop normally. In turn the blood cells have less hemoglobin and cannot transport as much oxygen throughout the body.

This results in your child feeling weak and like he or she has no energy.

Other symptoms of anemia include: Weakness, fatigue, irritability, pale skin, headaches, loss of appetite, light-headedness, and dizziness.

If your child has low hemoglobin levels, the pediatrician will determine a treatment plan and may also refer you to a Registered Dietitian to help increase the amount of iron in your child's diet.

The Head Start Program will need documentation that hemoglobin or hematocrit bloodwork was done at 12 or 24 months. If it was not done or if there is no record of it being done then it should be completed at the medical check-up.

For additional information on iron-deficiency anemia, refer to the online Head Start Nutrition Module "Iron Deficiency Anemia"

Hearing and Vision Testing in School

In Texas, it is a requirement for children enrolled in public school to have their hearing and vision tested at school several times throughout their elementary years. This includes children participating in the Head Start Program.

The purpose of the hearing and vision screening is to detect any possible concerns your child might be experiencing with their hearing or eyesight.

Parents will be notified if any concerns are noted during the screening tests done at school. Parents will be provided with a

referral to a specialist for a more thorough evaluation if needed.

If your child receives a referral for further evaluation, it is critical that you follow through by taking your child to the specialist.

The Head Start staff will assist you with locating community health providers, where you can take your child for further evaluation.

Correcting vision and hearing concerns at an early age is important for your child's health and wellbeing. It is especially important as your child begins their school years to prevent these concerns from becoming a barrier to your child's academic success.

Nutrition and Development

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

Children are rapidly growing and learning many new things during their preschool years. Proper nutrition provides children with the energy their bodies need to take on these tasks.

Children who are undernourished or who consistently eat unhealthy diets and do not provide their bodies with needed nutrients, may experience: being sick more often, decreased energy for activities, difficulty concentrating, behavioral problems, and learning

impairments. All of these effects can impact their performance at school.

It is important to note that eating healthy does not have to be expensive. If you are concerned about providing your child with the nutrition they need while following a budget, visit the “Eating Healthy on a Budget” online Head Start Nutrition Module.

Brain Development

The importance of nutrition on brain development cannot be understated. Providing adequate nutrition to your child supports proper brain development and thereby supports their learning in the classroom.

The United States Department of Agriculture has developed a resource called “MyPlate” aimed at helping Americans eat healthier.

The MyPlate graphic highlights the goal of encouraging individuals to choose a variety of different foods and beverages from each of the food groups. These include: Fruits, Vegetables, Low-Fat Dairy, Grains, and Proteins

On the ChooseMyPlate.Gov website there are recommendations specific for preschool children. Parents can use these as guidelines for ensuring that their children are provided with a well-balanced diet.

Specific nutrients to support brain development include: Healthy Fats such as Unsaturated fats. Particularly Omega-3 Fatty Acids found in seafood, walnuts, and flax seed oil.

Protein. Adequate protein is essential for normal growth and development. Choose lean sources of protein such as chicken, turkey, seafood, lean red meat, beans, nuts, and low-fat dairy.

Vitamins and Minerals. Choose a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables daily.

Nutrition and Learning – The importance of breakfast

Start the day out right and make sure your child eats breakfast every day.

Breakfast provides children with the energy they need for the day ahead.

Eating breakfast will help your child to concentrate and focus better when at school.

When a child skips breakfast and is hungry, their mind may be focusing on food and not on school work!

Too often breakfast is associated with sweet foods and an opportunity is missed for your child to consume nutrients they need to grow and develop.

Nutrients to encourage your child to eat at breakfast include:

- Calcium and Vitamin D from milk and other low-fat dairy items
- Vitamins, minerals, and fiber from fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
- Protein from eggs, lean meats, and nuts

To ensure breakfast is well balanced and contains the nutrients your child needs to grow, aim to include 3 items from different food groups.

These include: Fruits, Vegetables, Low-Fat Dairy, Whole Grains, Protein, Nuts, and Beans

A Dental Home

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.

Dental homes utilize a family-centered approach and focus on the development of an ongoing relationship between the dentist and the patient.

The dentist will work in collaboration with your child's pediatrician to promote the overall health of your child.

It is recommended children visit the dentist when their first tooth comes in or by their first birthday.

What to expect at the dentist appointment:

Your child will have their teeth, jaw, and gums examined for cavities, signs of tooth decay, and any oral concerns.

Your child's teeth will be cleaned, polished and a fluoride varnish will be applied to help strengthen the tooth's enamel.

Parents will be an active part of the exam and be requested to provide a medical and dental history, be taught proper tooth brushing and dental hygiene skills for preschool children, and receive guidance from the dentist on how to prevent tooth decay and cavities.

It is important to remember that your child may be apprehensive about visiting the dentist. Ease your child's mind by explaining to them what will take place and what to expect at the visit.

Dental Hygiene

In children, untreated tooth decay and cavities are one of the most common chronic diseases in the United States.

Poor dental health can cause a child pain, embarrassment, anxiety, and depression. It can also lead to inadequate nutrient intake due to pain and difficulty chewing.

Untreated dental infections can lead to distractions in the classroom and missed school days, both of which will impact learning.

The good news is that tooth decay is completely preventable through proper dental hygiene and regular dental exams and cleanings.

During the preschool years, it is important for children to learn about dental hygiene and proper tooth brushing.

In the Head Start program children are taught about the importance of taking care of their teeth.

At home it is important that parents continue to reinforce the importance of dental hygiene and serve as role models by brushing and taking care of their own teeth along with their child's.

Key Concepts for Preschool Children

Help your child with brushing their teeth twice per day after meals.

Make sure that all surfaces, including the front and back, of all teeth in the mouth are brushed.

Brushing teeth takes time, so do not let your child rush through the process! If you have trouble with this, try having your child singing the "ABC Song" twice, at a normal pace as a guide.

Even once your child can brush their teeth on their own, it is still a good idea to supervise to make sure they are brushing properly.

Children over the age of 2 should begin using a toothpaste that contains fluoride.

Children should only use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste when they brush their teeth. For this reason, it is important that parents help apply the proper amount of toothpaste to the toothbrush.

Toothpaste should not be swallowed, but rather children should be taught to spit the toothpaste out into the sink.

Be sure to discuss the use of any type of fluoridated mouth wash with your child's dentist before using.

Flossing helps keep your child's gums healthy and removes plaque between the teeth. Help your child with flossing their teeth daily.

Impact of Nutrition on Dental Health

Taking care of your child's teeth involves more than just daily brushing. Providing your child with a nutritious, well-balanced diet is also an important part in your child building strong, healthy teeth.

Frequent consumption of food and drinks that are high in sugar and acid can lead to tooth decay and an increased risk of developing cavities.

This includes soda, juice, sports drinks, lollipops, sticky candies such as gummies, fruit chews, caramels, as well as dessert items such as cakes, cookies, ice cream.

Limit these items in your child's diet and encourage your child to snack on healthier foods such as apple slices, cheese sticks, and raw vegetables.

Regular Meal and Snack Times

Promote the use of regular meals and snack times to promote dental health. Do not let your child sip on juice, sports drinks, or soda throughout the day as this will continually expose their teeth to sugar, instead make water the go-to choice.

You can encourage your child to drink water by getting them a water bottle to carry around.

Most tap water is fluoridated, which has the added benefit of fluoride to help strengthen your child's teeth and prevent tooth decay.

Only purchase and serve 100% fruit juice to your child. For children ages 1 to 6 years old limit consumption to the recommended 4 to 6 ounces per day.

Including calcium rich foods in your child's diet is important in the development of strong bones and teeth.

Calcium rich foods and drinks include:

Low-fat dairy such as 1% or fat free milk, low-fat yogurt, and cheese.

The recommended milk servings are:

2 cups per day for children ages 2 to 3.

And 2.5 cups per day for children ages 4 to 5.

Other calcium rich foods include: fortified juice and breakfast cereals, canned fish with bones (salmon), broccoli, kale, tofu, and soy.

Important reminders about Dental Hygiene

The bacteria that causes tooth decay can be transferred between people. This means you can transfer bacteria to your child.

Avoid sharing cups, water bottles, and utensils with your child to help prevent the spread of bacteria.

Promoting good dental hygiene for the entire family is important. Therefore, parents should also brush their teeth twice daily and floss

once per day. Regular dental visits are important for adults as well as children.

Preventative dental care can promote overall health and help give your entire family healthy smiles!

Conclusion

In this course you learned what a Medical and Dental Home are and how they provide ongoing comprehensive care of your children. You learned about the Texas Health Steps Program and the importance of following the recommended schedule for medical and dental check-ups. You learned about the impact of nutrition on brain development and learning. You also learned the importance of dental hygiene for overall health. We hope you will use the information in this course to promote the overall health and well-being of your children.