

News Release

Ontario Expands Free Dental Care for Eligible Children and Youth

Newly Integrated Dental Program Makes It Easier to Access Services

April 26, 2016 11:00 A.M. | [Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care](#)

More than 323,000 children from low-income families are getting free dental care through the new Healthy Smiles Ontario program. Under the expanded program, Ontario is providing free dental care to help families raise healthier kids. Children from low-income families can access free preventive, routine, emergency and essential care from licensed dental providers.

Ontario has integrated six publicly funded dental programs into one, providing a simplified enrolment process and making it easier for eligible children to get the care they need. These changes also mean that 70,000 more children from low-income families have become eligible for free dental services. Applicants can now sign up for this program online at ontario.ca/healthysmiles. They can also contact their local public health unit for information and support.

Research demonstrates that untreated oral health problems can affect a child's ability to eat, sleep and concentrate in school, which can impact their growth and development. The new Healthy Smiles Ontario program is part of Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy commitment to build community capacity to deliver oral health prevention and treatment services to children and youth from low-income families in Ontario.

Investing in dental care for children and youth is part of the government's plan to build a better Ontario through its Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care, which provides patients with faster access to the right care; better home and community care; the information they need to live healthy; and a health care system that is sustainable for generations to come.

Quick Facts

- Tooth decay is one of the most prevalent and preventable chronic diseases, particularly among children. It is the leading cause of day surgeries for children ages one to five and rates are four times higher for children from the least (versus the most) affluent neighbourhoods.
- Healthy Smiles Ontario covers regular visits to a licensed dental provider, such as a dentist or dental hygienist. It covers dental services including check-ups, cleaning, fillings, X-rays, and urgent/emergency oral health issues.
- Ontario engaged in significant consultation with community and public health partners as well as dental associations to develop the new Healthy Smiles Ontario program.

Background Information

- [Ontario Expands Free Dental Care for Eligible Children and Youth, Providing Easier Access to Dental Services](#)

Additional Resources

- [Healthy Smiles Ontario](#)
- [Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care](#)
- [Poverty Reduction Strategy](#)

Quotes



"We are making it easier for children to get the dental care they need because having good oral health and a healthy smile can have positive impacts on a child's overall health, self-esteem and ability to learn. Families are encouraged to visit ontario.ca/healthysmiles to find out if they're eligible and to enrol in this program. Tooth decay is one of the most common childhood diseases, but it's preventable with the proper dental care, and our expanded Healthy Smiles program is helping more kids access these important services."

Dr. Eric Hoskins

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

"A healthy smile on a child not only gives a visual idea of a child's oral health but it also reflects the critical issue of a healthy child free from the pain and health consequences of dental disease, including cavities and gum disease. We're helping low-income families to raise healthier kids by getting them the dental care they need and the smile they deserve."

Dr. David Williams

Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario

"Ontario's dentists support and advocate for accessible dental care for all. The ODA was pleased when the government streamlined six children's oral-care programs into the Healthy Smiles Ontario program. Eliminating duplication and creating a single program means more children and youth can go to school with a healthy smile. We will continue to work with the government to ensure sustainable and equitable funding for dental programs."

Dr. Victor Kutcher

President, Ontario Dental Association