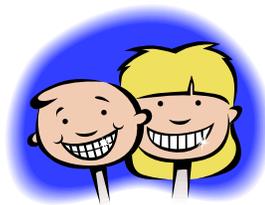


When we speak of oral health, we are talking about more than healthy teeth. We are talking about all of the mouth...the gums, the hard and soft palates, tongue, lips, chewing muscles, jaws; in short, all of the structures that allow us to speak and smile; smell, taste, touch, chew and swallow; and convey a world of feelings through facial expressions. ...oral health is integral to overall health. Simply put, that means you cannot be healthy without oral health.



~ David Satcher, former U.S. Surgeon General

Healthy Oral Health

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) says a healthy diet includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fat-free or low fat milk and milk products, lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts. There's another essential ingredient that could be part of that list – healthy oral health. Poor oral health and oral disease makes it painful to chew and difficult to swallow, which can significantly affect nutrition. Therefore, maintaining oral health is an important component of good nutrition and overall health.



So parents should not only remind their children to eat their vegetables, they also need to remind their kids to floss and brush their teeth. And, parents aren't the only ones who care about their children's oral health habits. In April 2003, then U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona issued a National Call to Action to Promote Oral Health based on the findings that:

- Oral health is an indication of overall health
- Oral diseases affect more than just the mouth
- Poor diet and unhealthy lifestyle choices, such as smoking, affect oral health, and
- The most common oral health diseases – dental caries (tooth decay or cavities) and periodontal (gum) diseases - are preventable.

The Call to Action challenged individuals, families, community leaders, health professionals, researchers, policymakers and others to improve the public's understanding of the importance of oral health by making oral health care part of everyone's health and wellness routines, and learn the signs and symptoms of oral health disease. The full report is available on-line at www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/oralhealth/nationalcalltoaction.htm.



Promoting Oral Health at Home:

For Baby - You can help make sure your baby has strong, healthy teeth even before she is born by getting prenatal care. After your child is born, oral health care should start before teeth come in. Using water and a small, soft-bristled toothbrush or clean cloth, wipe your baby's gums after feedings. Read more about caring for a young child's teeth at www.aap.org/publiced/BR_DentalByAge.htm.



The **American Academy of Pediatrics** recommends babies see their pediatrician for an oral health review at 6 months old. This will help find out if the baby is at high risk for oral caries. If he is, the doctor will make a referral to a dentist. Even if your baby is not at risk, his first dental appointment should be around the time of his first birthday and thereafter, every 6 months. Read tips for making the first visit successful at www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/wisdomtooth/first.htm.

For Young Children - Encourage your child to brush twice a day, to get in the habit. But, parents are still responsible for making sure teeth are clean and should floss in between teeth that are touching. When a child is 2, you can begin to use small amounts of toothpaste with fluoride.



For Teens - Just because teens have outgrown pacifiers, doesn't mean they have outgrown susceptibility to tooth decay.



In fact, because many teens are making their own food choices, which may include sugary snacks and drinks, they may be more at risk for oral health problems. It's important to keep up with daily brushing, regular dental exams, and to avoid risky behaviors, such as smoking or chewing tobacco, or not wearing a seat belt. In addition, if your teen plays sports make sure she wears a mouth guard to protect that lovely smile. Learn more at www.aapd.org/publications/brochures/teenage.asp.

Children with Special Health Needs (CSHN)

Some families with CSHN may be too overwhelmed to deal with oral health. In truth, families have no control over many aspects of their children's medical issues. However, good oral health is a health issue families can promote and often control. Learn how to prepare your child for a visit, and strategies for promoting communication and cooperation at www.mchoralhealth.org/Special/mod5_1b.htm. See additional resources for promoting oral health for CSHN at www.nidcr.nih.gov/OralHealth/OralHealthInformation/SpecialNeeds/.



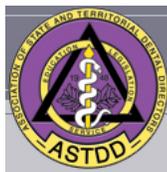
Family Voices is a national grassroots network of families and friends speaking on behalf of children with special health needs. Our children are also part of the wider world of children. With an Improving Understanding of MCH grant, Family Voices works to encourage partnerships between families and professionals for children's good health. **Bright Futures: Family Matters** is a publication to share with your networks. Check out our Family Voices web sites at www.brightfuturesforfamilies.org and www.familyvoices.org.



Partners...

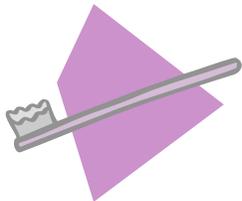
Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD) members

include dentists, dental hygienists and other public health professionals. This organization works with the oral health contact in each state and territory to raise awareness of oral health issues, promote oral health policies, and provides leadership to help create initiatives that help prevent oral diseases. Visit the website for information about each state and territory's oral health program. This includes best practices, initiatives for integrating oral health into school programs, as well as programs that specifically address the oral health needs of individuals with special health care needs.



ASTDD

105 Westerly Rd
New Bern, NC 28560
Phone: (252) 637-6333
www.astdd.org



What's New in Research?



Researchers at the University of Michigan recently found that a smile, in addition to being an expression of happiness, is also a measure of oral health and overall quality of life. As the 21 research subjects watched a comedy show, the researchers measured the width of each patient's smile, how wide open their mouths were and how many teeth they showed when they smiled. They compared each patient's smile dimensions to their oral health status. The results gave the researchers something to sink their teeth into. Subjects who were more down in the mouth had poorer oral health than participants who smiled freely. Dr. Marita Inglehart, the study author, concluded oral disease affects a person's smiling behavior, and says, "Smiling plays a significant and essential role in overall well-being. Previous findings suggest that smiling can affect social interactions, self-confidence and can influence how people perceive one another." Read more at www.joponline.org/doi/abs/10.1902/jop.2008.070344.



Tidbits

Would you give your eyeteeth to get your child to brush her teeth without an argument? Do you need to find a pediatric dentist? Do you have a sweet tooth for information about ways to promote oral health at home and in your community? Alternatively, perhaps you want to know what your state is doing to increase access to oral health providers. Examine the consumer resources, databases, and electronic newsletters in the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Library's recently updated Oral Health and Pregnant Women, Infants, Children, and Adolescents Knowledge Path to learn the answers to these questions and more at www.mchlibrary.info/KnowledgePaths/kp_oralhealth.html.



Maternal and Child Health Library *A virtual guide to MCH Information*

MCH welcomes your feedback! If you found the knowledge path useful, or conversely, if something you read left a bad taste in your mouth, let MCH know what needs improvement. Share your ideas at www.mchlibrary.info/KnowledgePaths/feedback.html.



Share your news with others!

We love to hear from partner and family organizations and invite you to share news about your organization's programs and activities. To share your tidbits and/or subscribe to this publication, email Betsy Anderson at banderson@familyvoices.org.

Editor: Beth Dworetzky (bdworetzky@cox.net)
Layout/Production: Bev Baker-Ajene (bevba@aol.com)

Family Resource Corner

Mouth Power is a fantastic, interactive website, developed in partnership by the American Dental Association and the National Museum of Dentistry. Using clever animations and fun games, children learn dental history, anatomy of the mouth, and about healthy choices and habits that promote a lifetime of healthy oral health. Visit the website (English **en Español**) at www.mouthpower.org.

The **American Dental Association (ADA)** has lots of information, including tips for choosing a dentist that will be a good match for your child and family at www.ada.org (English **en Español**). In addition, there's an excellent interactive story, **Visit the Dentist with Marty**, to help prepare young children (preschool through grade 2) for a visit to the dentist, also on the **ADA** site, at www.ada.org/public/games/story.asp.

Learn about pediatric dentistry and access an on-line search tool to help you find a dentist near you on the **American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry** website at www.aapd.org. And, if your child needs an activity to keep him busy on the drive to the dentist, or while waiting for his appointment, print the **Grins & Games** workbook at www.aapd.org/foundation/pdfs/2007GrinsGames.pdf. The colorful pictures, fun facts and games will keep your child entertained.