

Children's Oral Health Program

Spring 2010

New Jersey Department of Health & Senior Services

ORAL HYGIENE

FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH WITH SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that tooth decay affects more than 1/4 of U.S. children aged one to five years and 1/5 of those ages 12 – 15, and is almost entirely preventable.

The Maternal and Child Health Bureau reports that over 9 million children and adolescents under the age of 17 in the United States have a special health care need (SHCN). Children with SHCN's are almost twice as likely to have unmet dental needs than their counterparts across all income levels. Children may have increased oral disease due to daily medications, soft diets, physical limitations and other conditions and/or genetic disorders that can affect the quality of the tooth enamel, which may increase the susceptibility to tooth decay and gum disease.

Seal Away Tooth Decay

Sealants represent a major advancement in preventive dentistry, as well as a contributing factor in the potential for a generation of cavity free kids. Sealants are thin, plastic coatings painted on the chewing surface of teeth by a dentist or dental hygienist to prevent tooth decay. It forms a shield-like barrier from the food and plaque bacteria that get trapped in the tooth's pits and fissures (crevices) to begin the decay process. The molar teeth are most susceptible to decay.

Sealants are best applied after the eruption of the first and second permanent molars, before they have a chance to decay (eruption dates are ages 6 and 12 respectively). However, it is not too late to apply sealants even after these dates, as long as the teeth are free of decay and fillings.

The application process is simple. The teeth that are to be sealed will be gently cleaned and conditioned with a solution which helps the sealant adhere to the tooth. The sealant is then painted on the tooth surfaces where it hardens. Oftentimes, a special curing light will be used to help this process.

Sealants are generally not placed on primary (baby) teeth unless the child is considered at high risk for tooth decay.

Sealants may last up to 10 years. As long as the sealant remains intact, it is 100% effective.



NJDHSS Children's Oral Health Program What can we do for you?

The Children's Oral Health Program can provide an oral health education presentation for students in your school. A registered dental hygienist (RDH) can visit your school and conduct a presentation on oral health topics such as:

- Oral Hygiene
- Importance of Dental Visits and How to Locate a Dentist
- Nutrition – Healthy Food and Drink for Teeth
- Preventive Measures to Keep Teeth Healthy

Please call the Regional Oral Health Coordinator that covers your county to plan a presentation for your school!

Do You See *Pink* in the Sink?

Signs of Periodontal Disease

Periodontal disease is another term for gum disease (formerly referred to as pyorrhea). It is an infection caused by bacteria that destroy the supporting structures of the teeth, namely the gum tissue and bone. The gum and bone are the foundation for teeth. Gum disease is a chronic bacterial infection that also has potential systemic implications. Recent research suggests association between oral infections and diabetes, pre-term low-birth weight, heart disease, and stroke.

It is often a silent infection that occurs when harmful plaque bacteria travel beneath the gumline and create pockets, where additional plaque bacteria can be trapped. The first stage of gum disease is called gingivitis. A cardinal sign of gingivitis is bleeding gums. Healthy gums do not bleed, even during routine brushing. Many



people erroneously believe that bleeding gums are normal.

Signs of periodontal disease include:

- Red, swollen or tender gums or other pain in your mouth
- Bleeding while brushing, flossing, or eating hard food
- Gums that are receding or pulling away from the teeth, causing the teeth to look long
- Loose or separating teeth
- Pus between your gums and teeth
- Persistent bad breath
- A change in the way your teeth fit together when you bite
- A change in the fit of partial dentures

Tooth decay and gum disease can be prevented by the following:

1. Thorough brushing twice a day and flossing at least once per day.
2. Appropriate use of fluoride
3. Regular dental visits
4. Proper nutrition
5. Sealants
6. Avoidance of tobacco products.



NJ Dental Clinic Directory New Edition Coming Mid- 2010!

For students in need of dental services, please refer to the New Jersey Dental Clinic Directory which is a reference tool that provides a central source of information on public dental clinic services in the State. Clinic services are primarily provided by local health departments, hospitals and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). The 2008 edition of the Directory is currently on the State website. However, the directory will be updated in 2010.

To access the 2008 New Jersey Dental Clinic Directory on-line, go to the State website at:

www.nj.gov/health/fhs

Go to "See Topics – A to Z."

Click on "D" for dental or "O" for oral.

Dental Clinic Directory

Or enter the following URL directly:

www.state.nj.us/health/fhs/newborn/documents/dental_directory.pdf

