



2013 Children's Oral Health Survey

.....
a report on the oral health
.....
of Illinois' children
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OUR WISDOM IS TEETH.



improving the oral health of children and their families

Delta Dental of Illinois is proudly committed to improving the oral health of Illinois' children and their families. We are passionately engaged in this mission, working to provide oral health education to caregivers and children and remove barriers to care for disadvantaged and at-risk children.

We commissioned a survey of children's primary caregivers to gain insight about the oral health knowledge of caregivers and the status of their children's oral health. Michigan-based Morpace Inc. conducted email interviews with 151 primary caregivers of children from birth to age 11. The sample was designed to capture a broad spectrum of the Illinois population, not just those with dental insurance. With this research, Delta Dental of Illinois hopes to help educate and improve the oral health of Illinois families.

the survey revealed that although many Illinoisans rate their children's oral health as "excellent," they need to brush up on some critical children's dental health habits.

a pregnant woman's oral health is key to her baby's overall health.

Pregnant women no doubt want the best care for their babies, but many don't realize that means caring for themselves and their smiles.

In fact, four in 10 Illinois mothers did not visit a dentist during pregnancy – a significantly important behavior for helping prevent harmful oral and overall health problems for themselves and their babies.

Hormonal changes during pregnancy can exaggerate the way gum tissue reacts to plaque, increasing the risk for gingivitis, the first stage of periodontal (gum) disease. Some studies have suggested that pregnant women with moderate to severe gum disease may be more at risk to give birth to low-weight or pre-term babies, who in turn are at risk for many medical complications.

Women who are pregnant, or thinking about becoming pregnant, should schedule a dental checkup and cleaning to address any immediate oral health concerns. Dentists can identify and provide treatment for gum and teeth problems, and help assure a pregnancy free from oral health issues.



Oral Health Tips for Expecting Mothers

- Brush your teeth twice daily with fluoride toothpaste. Floss daily.
- Limit foods containing sugar to mealtime only.
- Choose water or low-fat milk and avoid carbonated beverages.
- Choose fruit rather than sugar-sweetened fruit juice to meet the recommended daily fruit intake.
- If you suffer from "morning sickness," make sure to rinse your mouth out afterward. A fluoride mouthrinse can leave a pleasant taste and help strengthen teeth, but even plain tap water will help wash away the acid that can harm the teeth.

baby's oral health routine should start on day one.

The Delta Dental Children's Oral Health Survey revealed that most American caregivers don't realize that cavities are nearly *100 percent preventable*. A baby's mouth does not contain decay-causing bacteria at birth, but typically gets exposed to them from a parent or caregiver during the first year of life. Tooth decay can develop any time after the first tooth comes in, starting at about 6 months of age. So from birth, it's important to establish good oral health habits to keep cavity-causing bacteria at bay.

Before the first tooth comes in, dentists recommend that caregivers wipe a baby's gums with a damp washcloth or soft infant toothbrush after meals.

Cleaning the baby's gums will help maintain a clean home for new teeth and help prepare the child for having the mouth cared for after eating.

Caregivers should also never put a child to bed or leave them in a stroller or car seat for a long time with a bottle of milk, juice, sweetened water or soft drinks. Sugar that lingers in the mouth for extended periods provides a constant source of food for the bacteria that cause tooth decay – often called baby bottle decay. Instead, caregivers should fill the bottle with water.

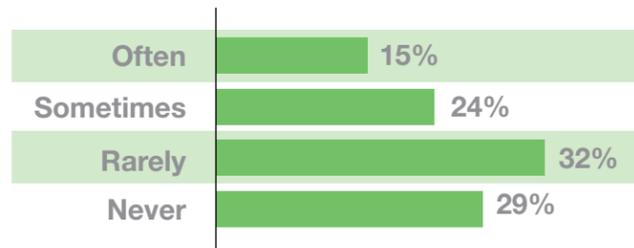
sharing food and utensils can mean sharing dental disease.

Most caregivers don't know that they can actually pass harmful bacteria from their mouths to their children's mouths, which can put children at an increased risk for cavities.

Bacteria are passed through the transfer of saliva. This often takes place through natural, maternal behaviors, such as sharing eating utensils or licking a baby's pacifier to clean it.

Those with a history of poor oral health and frequent cavities are most likely to pass the germs along. To protect children's teeth, caregivers should cut back on saliva-transferring behaviors and strive to keep their own mouths healthy.

Frequency of Sharing Utensils (Total Sample)



Source: Delta Dental of Illinois Children's Oral Health Survey, 2013

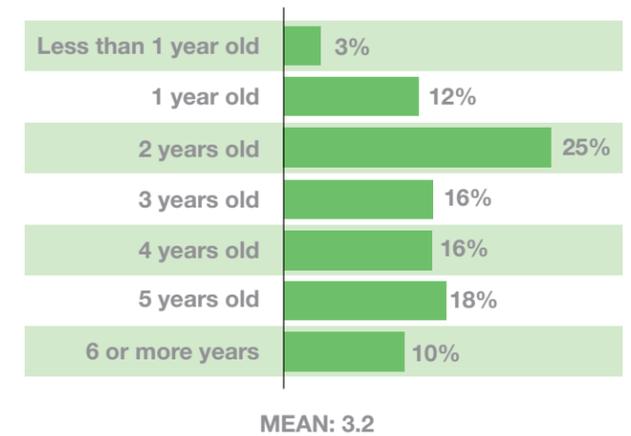
children should visit the dentist by age 1.

Regular dental visits are vital to good oral health – and a habit that should start sooner rather than later. The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends that children should go to the dentist within six months of getting their first tooth – and no later than their first birthday. Yet, most Illinois children don't see their family dentist until they are more than 3 years old.

When visiting the dentist by age 1, the child and parent can establish a relationship with a dentist, receive oral health care advice, and set a foundation for good dental health care habits. Studies suggest that early preventive dental care like checkups and cleanings can not only save in future dental treatment costs, but may also alleviate the pain and suffering that can result from untreated oral health problems.

Visit DentistBy1.com for information on caring for your little one's teeth. Pledge to take your child to the dentist by his or her first birthday (or simply for regular dental visits) – and Delta Dental of Illinois will donate an oral health kit to an underprivileged child.

Age of Child at First Dental Visit (Among Those Who Have Been to Dentist)



Source: Delta Dental of Illinois Children's Oral Health Survey, 2013



What to Expect at Your Child's First Visit

At the first check-up, the dentist will:

- Demonstrate brushing and flossing techniques.
- Discuss diet and feeding practices that put your child at risk for decay.
- Discuss the use of topical fluoride.
- Assess your child's bite, facial growth and development.
- Provide information for trauma prevention as your child goes through stages of development.

getting back to the basics: good oral health begins with brushing.

Developing proper brushing habits is an important part of maintaining good oral health. As children's teeth begin to come in, it becomes increasingly important that they are brushed for at least two minutes twice daily with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Parents should help children brush, or at least supervise, until they are age 7 or 8 or can properly care for their teeth on their own.



Make Brushing Fun for Children

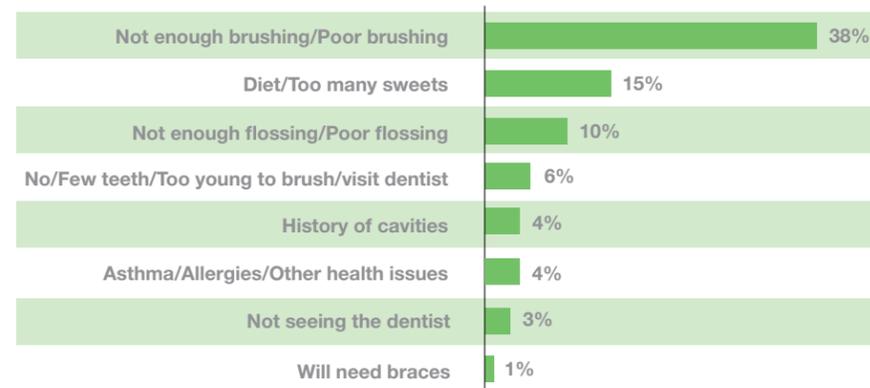
Getting children to brush regularly, and correctly, can be a real challenge. Here are some easy ideas to encourage brushing:

Trade places: Tired of prying your way in whenever it's time to brush those little teeth? Why not reverse roles and let the child brush your teeth? It's fun for them and shows them the right way to brush.

Take turns: Set a timer and have the child brush his or her teeth for 30 seconds. Then you brush his or her teeth for 30 seconds. Repeat this at least twice.

Obstacles to Children Having Excellent Oral Health

(Among Those Who Rate Less Than Excellent - Top Mentions)



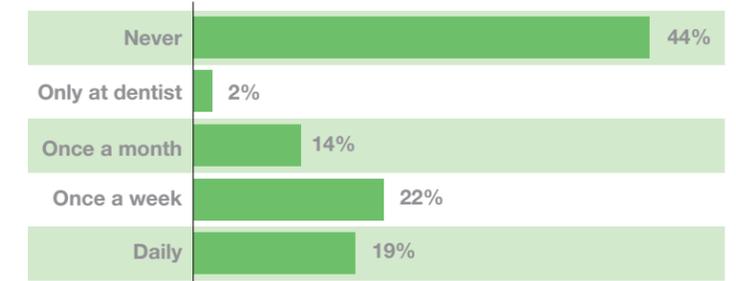
Source: Delta Dental of Illinois Children's Oral Health Survey, 2013

Only 56 percent of caregivers say children's teeth are brushed twice a day and 30 percent say children's teeth are brushed for less than two minutes.

lack of flossing is another obstacle to children having excellent oral health.

Flossing is the single best way to remove plaque from areas between teeth where a toothbrush can't reach. Once a child has two teeth that touch side-by-side, it's time to start flossing daily. Once a child is around 10 years old, he or she should be able to floss without help.

How Often Teeth are Flossed (Among Children who Have Teeth Already)



Source: Delta Dental of Illinois Children's Oral Health Survey, 2013



children should wear mouthguards for most sports – including practices.

As children begin playing sports, it's important their teeth are protected from trauma.

Although mouthguards are only mandatory for some youth sports, such as ice hockey, football and lacrosse, dental professionals recommend they be worn for all athletic activities where there is a strong potential for contact with other participants or hard surfaces.

Young athletes need to get in the habit of wearing mouthguards whenever they participate in sports. According to Safe Kids USA, most organized sports-related injuries occur during practice rather than games.

Mouthguard Use for Sports (Among Children 5 Years or Older who Play Each Sport)

	Football	Hockey	Soccer	Basketball	Baseball/Softball
Uses mouthguard at practice <u>and</u> games	95%	5%	34%	39%	37%
Uses mouthguard <u>only</u> at games	0%	35%	2%	0%	8%
Does <u>NOT</u> use mouthguard	5%	60%	65%	61%	55%

Source: Delta Dental of Illinois Children's Oral Health Survey, 2013

We're on a mission to improve oral health.

Information gathered in the 2013 Delta Dental of Illinois Children's Oral Health Survey is one example of our commitment to improving Illinois' oral health. Delta Dental of Illinois supports programs that focus on preventing dental disease, expanding access to care, advancing dental science and understanding the connections between oral and overall health.



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Delta Dental of Illinois
111 Shuman Boulevard
Naperville, IL 60563

deltadentalil.com