



Edelman Communications
Press Release: CDC/Dental Visits

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**CDC REPORT HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANCE
OF PEDIATRIC DENTAL VISITS**

Research Links Early Dental Care to Long-term Health Benefits

Chicago, Dec. 13, 2005 – Tooth decay, even in the earliest stages of life, can have serious implications for a child’s long-term health and well-being – and it’s becoming a more pressing issue every day. A recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) comparing the dental health of Americans in 1988-1994 and 1999-2002 found a 15.2 percent increase in cavities among two- to five-year olds.

As an effective way to begin a lifelong program of preventive dentistry, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) recommends that dental visits begin with the appearance of a child’s first tooth, typically around six months but no later than one year.

“During the ‘first-tooth visit,’ pediatric dentists check for proper oral and facial development to determine whether teeth are growing in properly and to detect early tooth decay,” says AAPD president, H. Pitts Hinson, D.D.S. “It also gives dentists the chance to walk parents through a home dental care program for their children.”

Early preventive care also is a sound health and economic investment. Some parents avoid taking children to the dentist to save money, yet studies show that the dental costs for children who have their first dental visit before age one are 40 percent lower in the first five years than for those who do not see a dentist prior to their first birthday.

In addition, without preventive care, the impact of tooth decay on child development can be striking. Numerous studies have linked childhood cavities with lower than ideal body weight. Even more disturbing is evidence that the effects of poor oral health may be felt for a lifetime: Emerging research suggests that improper oral hygiene may increase a child’s risk of eventually having low-birth-weight babies, developing heart disease or suffering a stroke as an adult.

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In addition to regular dental visits, the AAPD recommends that parents take the following precautions to help prevent tooth decay in children:

- Brush your child's gums twice a day with a soft cloth or baby toothbrush and water even before the first tooth appears.
- Talk to your pediatric dentist about your child's fluoride needs. Infants require fluoride to help developing teeth grow strong, and children who primarily drink bottled water may not be getting the fluoride they need.
- If you must put your child to sleep with a bottle, use nothing but water – other beverages can damage teeth, leading to cavities.
- Never dip a pacifier into honey or anything sweet before giving it to a baby.
- The best times for your child to brush are after breakfast and before bed.
- Limit frequency of snacking, which can increase a child's risk of developing cavities.
- Take good care of your own teeth. Studies show that babies and small children can “catch” cavity-causing bacteria from their parents.

American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry

Founded in 1947, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) is the non-profit membership organization representing the specialty of pediatric dentistry. The AAPD's 6,400 members are primary care providers who also provide comprehensive specialty treatments for infants, children, adolescents and patients with special health care needs. As advocates of children's oral health, the AAPD works closely with legislators, professional associations and health care professionals to develop policies and guidelines, implement research opportunities in pediatric oral health, and educate pediatric dentists, health care providers and the public regarding pediatric oral health. For further information, please visit AAPD's Web site at www.aapd.org.