



NEWS RELEASE

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New survey finds Illinois kids need brushing up on oral health

~February is National Children's Dental Health Month~

NAPERVILLE, Ill. (February 1, 2013) – Although cavities are nearly 100 percent preventable, more than one in four Illinois caregivers reported that their children had a cavity filled in the past year, according to a new survey¹ released today by Delta Dental of Illinois in conjunction with National Children's Dental Health Month. Among children who had a cavity in the past year, 51 percent had two or more cavities.

The 2013 Delta Dental of Illinois Children's Oral Health Survey shows that not only are Illinoisans unaware they can pass cavity-causing bacteria to children, but they also need to brush up on some critical children's dental health habits, including basics such as brushing and flossing.

"Parents and caregivers need to teach good oral health habits to children at a young age to help prevent cavities," said Dr. Katina Morelli, DDS, dental director for Delta Dental of Illinois. "Baby teeth are very important. They help children chew and speak properly and hold space for permanent teeth. If a child has healthy baby teeth, chances are he or she will have healthy adult teeth."

These are some of the oral health habits that fall short of what's recommended by dental professionals, according to the Delta Dental survey of 151 Illinois caregivers.

- **Survey shows:** Seventy-one percent of caregivers say they share utensils such as a spoon, fork or glass with a child.
- **Delta Dental of Illinois recommends:** Parents and caregivers should eliminate saliva-transferring behaviors – such as sharing utensils and toothbrushes and cleaning a pacifier with their mouths – all are activities that can pass harmful bacteria to a child.
- **Survey shows:** Fifty-eight percent of Illinoisans with a child 4 years old or younger report that the child sometimes takes a nap or goes to bed with a bottle or sippy cup containing milk or juice.
- **Delta Dental of Illinois recommends:** Parents and caregivers should not put a child to bed with a bottle of milk, juice, sweetened water or soft drinks – all can lead to baby

bottle decay. Instead, caregivers should fill the bottle with water if a bottle or sippy cup is needed.

- **Survey shows:** For children who have visited the dentist, the average age at the first visit was 3 years old.
- **Delta Dental of Illinois recommends:** Children should first visit the dentist within six months of getting the first tooth – and no later than their first birthday.
- **Survey shows:** Only 56 percent of children had their teeth brushed twice a day and 30 percent of children brush for less than two minutes.
- **Delta Dental of Illinois recommends:** Children’s teeth should be brushed twice a day for at least two minutes each time. Parents should assist with this task until the kids are about 6 years old.
- **Survey shows:** Forty-four percent of parents or caregivers report that their children’s teeth are never flossed, and of children whose teeth are flossed, only 19 percent are flossed daily.
- **Delta Dental of Illinois recommends:** Once any two teeth are touching, caregivers should floss, or help the child floss, once a day.

About Delta Dental of Illinois

Delta Dental of Illinois (DDIL) is a not-for-profit dental service corporation that provides dental benefit programs to individuals and more than 5,000 employee groups throughout Illinois. DDIL covers 2 million individuals, employees and family members in these groups nationwide. DDIL is based in Naperville, Illinois and offers single-site administration and client services.

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¹ *Morpace Inc. conducted the 2013 Delta Dental of Illinois Children’s Oral Health Survey. Interviews were conducted statewide via the Internet with 151 primary caregivers of children from birth to age 11. For results based on the total sample of national adults, the margin of error is ±3.2 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level.*