

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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31% of Illinois Parents Give their Children an A Grade for Overall Oral Health *Parents Concerned About School Days Missed for Oral Health Problems*

NAPERVILLE, Ill. (August 22, 2016) – Only 31 percent of Illinois parents of children 12 and younger would give their kids an A grade for their overall oral health, according to results from a survey released by Delta Dental of Illinois. Parents also report they are worried about the school days their kids miss because of oral health problems, with parents reporting that one in five Illinois children ages 6 to 12 missed school last year because of oral health problems.

Tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease. Untreated tooth decay is not only painful, but also may affect a child's ability to eat and speak. Poor oral health is also detrimental to a child's learning and success in school, contributing to school absences and lower grades.

The survey results show there is need for improvement in Illinois:

- 29 percent of Illinois children have had cavities in the past year.
- Only 65 percent of Illinois children who have visited a dentist have done so before age 5 when children should visit the dentist by age 1.
- 40 percent of Illinois children do not brush their teeth the recommended two times per day

However, the same survey of Illinois parents also showed that kids who take good care of their teeth are more outgoing, confident and successful than those who do not have good oral health habits. Illinois parents report that children who brush their teeth at least two times a day are more likely to be successful (66 percent), outgoing (73 percent) and proud of themselves (76 percent).

"Pain caused by oral health problems can affect a child in many ways from their ability to focus in the classroom to their confidence," said Katina Spadoni, DDS, dental director for Delta Dental of Illinois. "Good oral health is a key component to a child's overall well-being. Not only will good oral health give a child confidence, but it can also help a child succeed in school."

According to Delta Dental of Illinois' survey, oral health is top of mind for parents. Nearly three in four parents (67 percent) cite their child's oral health as a top concern that they think about daily, in line with other top concerns, including their child's performance in school (55 percent), diet and nutrition (68 percent) and physical activity (53 percent).

So, to ensure a healthy, happy school year, now is the perfect time to put new oral health routines in place. Here are a few things parents and children can do to keep children's mouths healthy:

- Brush all surfaces of the teeth with fluoride toothpaste twice a day. Brush teeth gently for two minutes and pay special attention to the gum line.
- Floss teeth at least once a day.
- Pack a healthy lunch, limiting sugary snacks and high-starch or refined carbohydrate foods. Pack milk or water instead of juice. The bacteria that cause tooth decay thrive on simple sugars like those found in sticky foods and drinks.
- Schedule regular dental visits.

View Delta Dental of Illinois' children's oral health infographic [online](#). For more suggestions on how to take care of children's oral health, visit YourOralHealthHub.com.

About Delta Dental of Illinois

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

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About the Survey: These questions are from The Children's Oral Health Survey conducted by Kelton Global between Dec. 16, 2015 and Jan. 14, 2016 among 357 parents of children ages 12 or under. The margin of error is +/-2.7 percent. All data in this release are self-reported by the parents.