



NEWS RELEASE

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Illinois kids' anxiety about dentists may be learned from parents

Percentage of parents nervous about dental visits matches kids who share the feeling

NAPERVILLE, Ill. (April 1, 2015) – Contrary to some Illinois parents' popular belief, their children aren't born with a fear of the dentist, rather, the apple may not fall far from the tree. A new statewide survey, out today from Delta Dental of Illinois, finds that children may be picking up on their parents' fear of visiting the dentist.

The survey of parents with children 12 and under, being released in conjunction with National Anxiety Month in April, finds that nearly half (49 percent) of parents say they are nervous about going to the dentist, and roughly the same number (52 percent) of their children share the sentiment.

"It's easy for kids to pick up on their parents' anxieties when it comes to the dentist so parents should try to stay positive when talking with their children about dental visits," says Dr. Katina Spadoni, dental director for Delta Dental of Illinois. "It's also important for parents responsible for taking children to the dentist to remain relaxed and calm during visits to help kids feel at ease."

A routine dental visit is one of the most essential oral health habits for healthy teeth, but while many kids are apprehensive before a dental visit, nearly four in 10 (39 percent) are actually fearful. The top reason Illinois parents say children are anxious to see the dentist is the possibility of a painful visit (61 percent). Other reasons include concerns the visit might take too long (32 percent), it may require additional dental work (20 percent) and the child doesn't like his or her dentist (12 percent).

Whether children are a little nervous or downright afraid, Delta Dental of Illinois offers parents these tips to help their children feel more comfortable going to the dentist:

- **Start young.** It's recommended that children visit the dentist within six months of getting the first tooth – and no later than the first birthday. Starting at a young age allows children and parents to establish a relationship with a dentist and helps start a routine of visiting the dentist regularly.
- **Talk positively.** If children ask questions before a visit to the dentist, avoid using words that could make them scared, such as drill, filling or shot. Unless they specifically ask if the procedures will be painful, avoid comforting kids by saying the dentist won't hurt them. Instead, explain that the dentist is simply going to check their smile and count their teeth.
- **Play dentist at home.** Before a dental appointment, play dentist and patient with children. Open your child's mouth and count his or her teeth. Be sure to avoid making any drilling noises and keep the experience positive. Let your child play dentist to a toy or stuffed animal, pretending to brush and count its teeth.
- **Call ahead.** Tell the dentist ahead of time that your child may be anxious about the visit. Most pediatric dental offices will have toys or music that children can focus on instead of the appointment itself, helping them relax and making a trip to the dentist a fun and enjoyable experience.

"If children have a bad experience, it could jeopardize their willingness to visit the dentist throughout childhood and into adulthood," added Spadoni.

For more tips on taking care of children's teeth, visit YourOralHealthHub.com.

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 nationwide. DDIL is based in Naperville, Illinois and offers single-site administration and client services.

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¹Kelton, a leading global insights firm, conducted the 2015 Delta Dental of Illinois Children's Oral Health Survey. Interviews were conducted statewide via email with 231 parents of children ages 12 and under. For results based on the total sample of Illinois adults, the margin of error is ±6.5 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level.