



NEWS RELEASE

Delta Dental of Illinois
111 Shuman Boulevard
Naperville, Illinois 60563

Contact:

Liz Jans
Meyocks
515-238-4304

lizjans@meyocks.com

Additional Media Contact:

Lyndsay Bradshaw
Delta Dental of Illinois
630-718-4753

lbradshaw@deltadentalil.com

Illinois parents have harder time getting kids to floss than to help around house

Delta Dental of Illinois provides tips to motivate kids to brush and floss

NAPERVILLE, Ill. (March 4, 2015) – Think it’s tough to get kids to help with household chores? It may be even tougher to get them to floss their teeth. That’s a finding from a new survey of Illinois parents released today by Delta Dental of Illinois¹ in conjunction with National Parenting Month in March.

Nearly half of Illinois parents (47 percent) say getting kids to floss their teeth is one of the most challenging things to get their kids to do. That’s slightly higher than getting children to help with household chores (44 percent). Thirty-five percent of parents also said it was a challenge to get their kids to brush their teeth regularly.

Therefore, it’s not surprising most parents think their children’s oral health isn’t as good as it could be because they don’t brush (47 percent) or floss (43 percent) often enough. Two in three parents (66 percent) even admit their child’s teeth are flossed less often than once a day.

“At some point, most parents will struggle with getting their children to brush and floss. Until they are a little older, it’s hard for kids to understand the importance of oral health,” says Dr. Katina Spadoni, dental director for Delta Dental of Illinois. “If parents make sure children’s teeth are brushed and flossed from a very young age, it becomes part of the routine without question.”

Parents are working to get on the right track, however, according to the survey. Sixty-six percent of Illinois parents have specifically made oral hygiene a routine in their homes, and 27 percent have asked other family members to enforce good oral health habits. As far as their strategies to encourage good habits, parents are more likely to give rewards for good behavior (62 percent) than punish bad behavior (11 percent) to get their children to take care of their teeth.

Delta Dental of Illinois provides some positive ways to make brushing and flossing an easier item on the to-do list.

Be a role model. Kids love to imitate their parents. So when they are young, make dental care a family activity by brushing and flossing in front of and with children. Among parents who have taken recent action to improve their children's oral health, nearly half (45 percent) are already doing this by brushing their teeth at the same time as their kids do. During family brushing time, reverse roles and let your child brush your teeth. It's fun for them and demonstrates the correct way to brush.

Reward good oral health. Nearly two of three parents (62 percent) say rewarding kids for good behavior would be the best way to get them more excited about improving oral health. Create a chart that keeps track of daily oral health habits and reward kids for consistently completing tasks.

Call in reinforcements: For parents whose children stubbornly neglect to brush or floss, maybe it's time to change the messenger. Call the dental office before the next checkup and let them know what's going on. The same motivational message might be better received if it comes from a third party, like the dentist.

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 Original Tooth Fairy Poll. Interviews were conducted statewide via email with 162 parents of children ages 12 and under. For results based on the total sample of Illinois adults, the margin of error is ± 7.7 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level.