



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

February 9, 2016

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New Survey Reveals the State of Children's Dental Health in Illinois

Delta Dental of Illinois survey marks National Children's Dental Health Month

NAPERVILLE, Ill. – February marks National Children's Dental Health Month, highlighting the importance of maintaining children's dental health and instilling good oral hygiene habits at an early age. A 2016 study by Delta Dental of Illinois provides insight into the state of children's dental health.

Illinois parents have reasons to be proud: 71 percent of parents say their children had no cavities in the last year and 89 percent say their children are brushing at least once a day, with 67 percent brushing the recommended twice a day or more.

Other positive findings include:

- 67 percent of parents think about their child's oral health every day.
- 87 percent of children have dental coverage, either public or private.
- 27 percent of children are flossing every day.

"The foundation for a lifetime of healthy smiles is established at an early age," said Dr. Katina Spadoni, dental director for Delta Dental of Illinois. "It's tremendously important to instill in children good dental hygiene practices when they're young. Dental health issues can affect children's overall health and wellness, leading to insomnia, poor eating habits, and causing school absences, as well as exacerbating health conditions now and later on in life."

The survey did raise concerns, such as:

- 29 percent of children had at least one cavity in the past year (1 cavity: 11 percent, 2 cavities: 12 percent, and 3 or more: 6 percent).
- 30 percent of parents say their children never floss.
- 43 percent of children 3 years old or younger have never been to a dentist. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that a child visit the dentist by age one.

- 22 percent of parents with children 12 and under say their children have not been to a dentist.
- 66 percent of parents with children under 3 who use sippy cups allow their children to nap with the cup at least a few times per week .This is problematic because a sippy cup containing juice or milk may leave sugar and acids on teeth, creating a major risk factor for tooth decay.

Spadoni recommends that parents begin brushing their children's teeth when the first tooth appears, using a soft brush, a smear of fluoride toothpaste and water, and that they supervise their children brushing until their children reach age 8.

As a reminder, children should first visit the dentist after the first tooth appears or by their first birthday. The dental health habits parents pass on to their children will last a lifetime.

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

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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.

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 +/-2.4 percent. All data in this release are self-reported by the parents.