



NEWS RELEASE

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The Tooth Fairy Placed Higher Value on Teeth in 2013 *Illinois parents share duties as Tooth Fairy assistants*

NAPERVILLE, Ill. (Feb. 27, 2014) – The Tooth Fairy was a lot more generous in 2013 than the year before, with the going rate for a lost baby tooth rising more than 44 percent from 2012 levels.

Nationally, the average gift for a lost baby tooth last year was \$3.50, up \$1.08 from the prior year according to [The Original Tooth Fairy Poll](#)[®] sponsored by Delta Dental.¹ The average lost-tooth gift in Illinois was slightly lower at \$3.10, while \$1.00 was the most common gift amount in Illinois.

But when it comes to gifts for losing the first tooth, the Tooth Fairy loosened up her purse strings even more when visiting children in Illinois. According to the poll, the average gift for the first lost tooth in Illinois was \$4.51, a 46 percent premium over gifts for other teeth.

Another difference in Illinois was the Tooth Fairy's choice of assistants. Nationally, six in 10 caregivers say the child's mother assists the Tooth Fairy, compared to 35 percent who say the father assists the Tooth Fairy. But Illinois dads are more likely help the Tooth Fairy. Caregivers here say 46 percent of dads and 53 percent of moms are the primary assistants.

“Leaving gifts from the Tooth Fairy is a great way to help make losing teeth less scary and more enjoyable for kids,” said Dr. Katina Spadoni, Delta Dental of Illinois' dental director. “Delta Dental of Illinois encourages parents to talk about the Tooth Fairy's visits as a way to discuss good oral health even before a child loses their first tooth.”

Waiting vs Pulling First Tooth

About 63 percent of Illinois caregivers surveyed said their child waited for the first tooth to fall out on its own. Other children were less patient. Nine percent couldn't contain their excitement and pulled their own tooth out, while 24 percent had a parent or someone else pull the tooth.

No matter how the tooth comes out, 21 percent of Illinois parents report their child lost a tooth while at school. Another 20 percent report the tooth was lost while eating.

Tooth Fairy as Teaching Tool

In 2013, the Tooth Fairy visited 90 percent of Illinois homes with children who lost a tooth. Delta Dental of Illinois suggests the following ways parents can use the Tooth Fairy as a way to teach kids about good oral health habits:

- **Introduce the Tooth Fairy early on.** Kids will start losing baby teeth around age 6. Before this age, parents can teach kids about the Tooth Fairy and let them know that good oral health habits and healthy teeth make her happy. Use this as an opportunity to brush up on a child's everyday dental routine. Kids not wanting to brush and floss? Remind them that the Tooth Fairy is only looking for healthy baby teeth, not teeth with cavities. This will help get kids excited about taking care of their teeth.
- **Leave a note reinforcing good habits.** A personalized note from the Tooth Fairy could be nearly as exciting for kids as the gift itself. Parents should include tips for important oral health habits that the Tooth Fairy wants kids to practice, such as brushing twice a day, flossing once a day and visiting the dentist twice a year. And, of course, parents should give the Tooth Fairy a special name.
- **Give oral health gifts.** Although the Tooth Fairy left cash for kids in 99 percent of Illinois homes she visited, some children received toys or other gifts. Consider forgoing cash and reinforce good oral health habits by providing a new toothbrush with their favorite cartoon character or fun-flavored toothpaste. How about a new book? There are several children's books about Tooth Fairy adventures that can add to the Tooth Fairy excitement. Also gone are the days of worrying about not being able to find the tiny tooth under your child's pillow in the middle of the night. Special Tooth Fairy pillows with tiny, tooth-sized pockets attached are now available in many themes and can even be customized with your child's name. But if the family tradition has always included money, you don't have to stop. Consider giving both cash and a new toothbrush to reinforce good oral health habits.

"The Tooth Fairy is a great way to tap into your child's imagination to help him or her understand the importance of oral health and to help make taking care of teeth more exciting," Dr. Spadoni said.

For more information and ways to make your child's Tooth Fairy experience extra special, visit www.theoriginaltoothfairypoll.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 in these groups nationwide. DDIL is based in Naperville, Illinois and offers single-site administration and client services.

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¹Morpace, Inc. conducted The Original Tooth Fairy Poll[®] on behalf of Delta Dental with 1,001 parents across the United States. A total of 150 parents were surveyed in Illinois.