



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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June is National Smile Month

Survey shows Illinois children need to brush, floss more often

NAPERVILLE, Ill. (May 28, 2012) – June is National Smile Month, and a great time to get back to the basics of oral health care and teach kids the best ways to keep their teeth healthy – by brushing twice a day and flossing once a day.

According to a survey by Delta Dental of Illinois,¹ poor brushing and not enough brushing may be the major obstacles keeping children from having excellent oral health and are the areas that cause Illinois caregivers the greatest concern.

While a third of Illinoisans (33 percent) report that their child's overall oral health is excellent, nearly two in five of the survey respondents (39 percent) admit their child brushes his or her teeth less than twice a day. And only half (51 percent) say their child brushes his or her teeth for at least two minutes, which is the amount of time dentists typically recommend spending on each brushing.

Another 9 percent of survey respondents believe that the biggest obstacles to their child's good oral health are poor flossing and not enough flossing. While the American Association of Pediatric Dentistry recommends flossing daily, half (50 percent) of the survey respondents whose children have teeth say they have never been flossed; only 12 percent report their child's teeth are flossed daily.

Make Brushing Fun

Getting children to brush regularly, and correctly, can be a real challenge. Here are some easy ideas to encourage brushing:

- **Trade places:** Tired of prying your way in whenever it's time to brush those little teeth? Why not reverse roles and let the child brush your teeth? It's fun for them
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and shows them the right way to brush. Just remember, do not share a toothbrush. According to the American Dental Association, sharing a toothbrush may result in an exchange of microorganisms and an increased risk of infections.

- **Take turns:** Set a timer and have the child brush his or her teeth for 30 seconds. Then you brush their teeth for 30 seconds. Repeat this at least twice.
- **Call in reinforcements:** If 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 heeded if it comes from a third party, especially the dentist.

“Illinois caregivers say they understand that proper brushing techniques are critical to children’s oral health,” said Katina Morelli, DDS, dental director for Delta Dental of Illinois. “But there’s clearly a need for more frequent and better education, to teach practices that will ensure lifelong oral health. And, since people overwhelmingly prefer the dentist as their primary information source, dental benefits that encourage visits to the dentist are crucial.”

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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¹ *Morpace Inc. conducted the 2011 Delta Dental Children’s Oral Health Survey. Interviews were conducted by email statewide with 151 primary caregivers of children from birth to age 11. For results based on the total sample of Illinois adults, the margin of error is ±8 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level.*