

Focus on

Fluoride

This newsletter is designed to share information on school fluoride programs with administrators, principals, and teachers. PLEASE ROUTE THIS newsletter to staff working with the school fluoride program.

Vol. 5, No. 1 February 2000

Heads Up! We May Be Coming to Your School.....

Between February and May, dental hygienists from the North Dakota Department of Health and local public health units may be visiting your school to learn about the health of children's teeth in your county and across North Dakota. A random sample of schools has been selected to participate in the survey. The Oral Health Survey of Third Graders will help our program plan future oral health programs aimed at meeting the needs of our children. As you know, a healthy mouth is part of total health and wellness and enables a child to learn.

With parental consent, a dental hygienist will screen a student's teeth to check for dental decay and other dental problems. Each child will receive a toothbrush and a letter to take home to parents that tells about their teeth.

If your school is selected as a screening site, we hope you will participate. We look forward to working with you in gathering important oral health data that will help children who have unmet dental needs receive treatment services.

Good News for Families Who Can't Afford Dental Care.....

Beginning Oct. 1, 1999, the state of North Dakota expanded health insurance coverage (including dental coverage) to previously uninsured children in families whose adjusted gross income is at or below 140 percent of the federal poverty level who are not eligible for the Medicaid Program. The new insurance program called "Healthy Steps" is provided through a contract with Noridian Mutual Insurance Company. If you are aware of families who might need this dental coverage, we urge you to suggest they consider applying for the program. The toll-free line for families to obtain additional information and an application is 1.800.755.2604.

In addition to the "Healthy Steps" program, the "Caring Program for Children" will provide health and dental benefits for families with incomes from 141 to 200 percent of the federal poverty level. For more information on the Caring Program, families can call 1.800.342.4718.

February Is National Children's Dental Health Month.....

"Healthy Smiles Are Out of This World" is the theme for National Children's Dental Health Month. This year's campaign features Dudley the Dinosaur and his pals in outer space.

To keep your smile healthy, be sure to:

1. *Brush and floss each day.*
2. *Eat nutritious foods.*
3. *Visit your dentist regularly.*

Activities that can be incorporated in your lesson plans include:

- Hold a dental health coloring or art contest--use the theme "Healthy Smiles Are Out of This World," and ask children to draw a picture of themselves with a big smile and stars in the background. You may also use one of the coloring sheets enclosed with this newsletter.
- Show a dental health video for children.
- Create an oral health bulletin board.
- Hold a dental health essay or limerick contest. Ask children to elaborate on a sentence, such as "My smile is important because . . ." or "The best thing about a person's smile is . . ."
- Invite a dental professional to your classroom to inform children about proper oral health habits.
- Hold a dental health fair.
- Spell dental terms.
- Hold a "sugarfast" day at your school. Encourage children not to eat any foods with added sugar that day.
- Place an article about oral health in your school newsletter. Feel free to use any information found in this *Focus on Fluoride* newsletter.
- Take a field trip to a local dental office and write a report about the visit.
- Have your class check out these new dental websites for kids:



www.drkazdds.com
www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/wisdomtooth/
www.oralbkids.com

Pointers for Parents

ORTHODONTICS - More Than Just a Pretty Smile...

The American Dental Association recommends that all children receive an orthodontic evaluation by age 7. At the first visit, the orthodontist (a dentist who specializes in correcting bite and jaw problems) will examine the mouth and give a full explanation of the situation. While this first exam does not always result in immediate treatment, it allows the orthodontist to determine how and when a child's particular problem should be treated for the most improvement with the least time and expense.

In most cases, malocclusions (problems with the way teeth fit together) are hereditary, caused by differences in the size of the teeth and jaw, and cannot be prevented. Sometimes a malocclusion is the result of habits such as finger or thumb sucking, tongue thrusting, mouth breathing or by losing baby teeth too soon.

Orthodontics is not used only to improve a child's appearance. A bad bite or crooked teeth can have long term effects, such as:

- Interference with normal growth and development of the jaws.
- Abnormal swallowing patterns.
- Abnormal facial muscle function.
- Chewing problems.
- Speech defects.
- Greater risk of tooth decay due to the inability to remove plaque from crooked teeth.
- Greater vulnerability to accidents and fractures due to front teeth that stick out.

Most orthodontic problems can be corrected with braces -- metal or plastic devices that exert gentle, constant pressure on teeth, allowing them to move. This takes place slowly and carefully over a period of time. Braces are one of the things that can be done to improve a child's self-esteem and oral health.

Tips for Teachers... Orthodontic Emergencies

problems with braces and retainers:

- If a protruding wire is causing irritation, cover the end with a small cotton ball, beeswax or a piece of gauze until a dentist can see the child.
- If a wire gets stuck in the cheek, do not attempt to remove it. Go to the dentist immediately.
- If an appliance is loose or a piece breaks off, place the appliance and the piece in a clean container and advise parents to take the child to the dentist.

Supplies...

If you need supplies for your school fluoride program call:

Oral Health Program
Telephone: 701.328.4930
1.800.472.2286 (toll-free)
Fax: 701.328.1412

Did You Know?

America's youngest and poorest children (ages 2 through 5 and living below the poverty level) have almost five times as much tooth decay as children of higher income families (more than 300 percent of poverty).

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