

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. 8, No. 1 February 2003

Flossing Facts . . .

Flossing helps clean teeth in the areas that brushing alone just cannot reach (between the teeth and under the gum line). Flossing and then brushing helps remove plaque, a sticky substance that accumulates and hardens over time. Left untreated, plaque deposits eventually can lead to gum disease and tooth decay.

Learning the proper way to floss your teeth is important. Your dentist or hygienist will be happy to demonstrate proper flossing techniques. Consumers can choose between waxed or unwaxed, flavored or unflavored, and regular or tape types. In general, a waxed floss slides between the teeth more easily than an unwaxed floss. Flavored floss leaves a fresh taste in the mouth and is especially nice for those times when brushing or rinsing is not possible. Tape floss is typically thicker than regular floss and generally is favored by people with wide gaps between their teeth.

- Break off about 18 inches of floss and wind most of it around one of your middle fingers. Wind the remaining floss around the same finger of the opposite hand. This finger will take up the floss as it becomes dirty. Hold the floss tightly between your thumbs and forefingers.
- Guide the floss between your teeth using a gentle rubbing motion. Never snap the floss into the gums.
- When the floss reaches the gum line, curve it into a C shape against one tooth. Gently slide it into the space between the gum and the tooth.
- Hold the floss tightly against the tooth. Gently rub the side of the tooth, moving the floss away from the gum with up and down motions.
- Repeat this method on the rest of your teeth.
- Don't forget the back side of your last tooth.

Flossing is a multi-sensory experience, and you now have a full array of choices and flavors. Whatever your needs or preferences are, there is bound to be a product that will help you clean between the teeth and under the gum line. Brushing twice a day and flossing your teeth daily will help ensure the wellness of your teeth.

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

"Don't Let Your Smile Become Extinct" is the theme for National Children's Dental Health Month. This year's campaign features Dudley the Dinosaur and his pals on a mountain climbing expedition.

To keep your smile from becoming extinct, be sure to:

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

Activities that can be incorporated into your lesson plans include:

- ✓ Hold a dental health coloring or art contest; use the theme "Don't Let Your Smile Become Extinct!" and ask children to draw pictures of themselves with a big smile. Use one of the coloring sheets enclosed with this newsletter.
- ✓ Show a dental health video for children.
- ✓ Create a "Healthy Smiles" oral health bulletin board with smile photos that students clip from magazines. Add oral health tips: brush and floss each day, eat nutritious foods, visit your dentist regularly, etc.
- ✓ Hold a dental health essay or limerick contest. Children could complete 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 "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.
- ✓ Hold a dental health fair.
- ✓ Spell dental terms.
- ✓ Have your class check out these dental websites for kids: www.oralbkids.com; www.ada.org; www.mrreach.com.

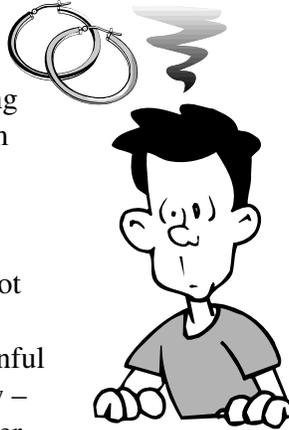


Dental Health Education Sessions . . .

Oral health presentations for children in preschool through grade six are available. If you are interested, call your regional consultant to schedule a presentation.

Oral Piercing.

Oral piercing involving the tongue, lips or cheeks has become a popular practice. Many side effects, ranging from discomfort to serious health hazards, can result from these procedures. Anyone thinking about oral piercing should consider whether the benefits outweigh the risks. Serious infections, such as hepatitis B and HIV, can be transmitted during oral piercing if the instruments have not been properly sterilized. Other risks include:



- **Pain and Bleeding** – Piercing can be extremely painful and will result in swelling and increased saliva flow – even drooling. Healing may take six weeks or longer, especially if there are complications.
- **Infection** – The human mouth contains millions of bacteria, and infection is a common complication of oral piercing.
- **Dental Problems** – Jewelry can chip or crack your teeth, and gums near the site may recede due to irritation.
- **Heart Problems** – People who have cardiac abnormalities are at increased risk for inflammation of the heart valves and tissues.
- **Injury** – One can easily choke on any studs, barbells or hoops that come loose in your mouth.

Jewelry worn in the mouth can hinder your ability to eat, not to mention your speech. It's hard to be cool when you can't pronounce your words or when pieces of your lunch are stuck to that tiny barbell.

Piercing is a so-called fashion statement that involves more than just deciding what jewelry will be attached to the body and where. This decision could have major consequences for your oral health, too.

Annual Report Time . . .

The annual report of program participation was sent to your school in January. Please be sure to fill it out and return it by Feb. 15, 2003. Since we are a federally funded program, we must report this data for continued funding.

DID YOU KNOW?
Poor oral health is associated with diminished growth in young children.

Supplies...

For fluoride program supplies, call the Oral Health Program: 701.328.4930 • 1.800.472.2286 • Fax: 701.328.1412

Regional Oral Health Consultants

NORTHEAST REGION
Barbara Collins, RDH
701.284.6899

SOUTHEAST REGION
Hollie Maas-Harrington, BS, RDH
701.683.9072

NORTH CENTRAL REGION
Lauri Johnson, RDH
701.385.3277

SOUTH CENTRAL REGION
Judy Ryan, RDH
701.255.4766

SOUTHWEST CENTRAL REGION
Marlene Hulm, RDH
701.663.7962

NORTHWEST REGION
Tracey Haugenoe, RDH
701.774.8708

SOUTHWEST REGION
Carla Kelly, RDH
701.523.3423

– **STATE OFFICE** –
Maija Beyer, RDH
Oral Health Program Director
701.328.2356
1.800.472.2286 (toll-free)



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Oral Health Program
Division of Maternal & Child Health
North Dakota Department of Health
600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 301
Bismarck, N.D. 58505-0200

State Health Officer: Dr. Terry Dwelle
Section Chief: Dr. John Joyce
Division Director: Sandra Anseth
Editor: Maija Beyer
Associate Editor: Judy Ryan