

Focus on Oral Health

Volume 1, Issue 3

September 2007



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT of HEALTH

Protect Your Child's Development

Now that the children are back in school it's important to remind ourselves of the number of dental emergencies and injuries that can occur on the school playground or during a sporting event.

There are a number of simple precautions you can take to avoid accident and injury to your child's teeth. One way to reduce the chances of damage to a child's teeth, lips, cheek and tongue is to have the child wear a mouth guard when participating in sports or recreational activities that may pose a risk. This includes a wide range of sports like football, hockey, basketball, baseball, gymnastics, soccer, volleyball and skateboarding.

A misdirected elbow in a one-on-one basketball game, being pushed at the water fountain while getting a drink, or a spill off a bicycle can leave you with chipped or broken teeth, nerve damage to a tooth or even tooth loss.

A properly fitted mouth protector may be especially important for those who wear braces or have fixed bridge work. A blow to the face could damage the brackets or other fixed orthodontic appliances. Talk to your dentist or orthodontist about selecting a



mouth protector that will provide the best protection. Although mouth protectors typically only cover the upper teeth, your dentist or orthodontist may suggest that a mouth protector be worn on the lower teeth as well. A properly fitted mouth protector will stay in place while wearing it, making it easy to talk and breathe.

Mouth protectors should ideally be replaced after each season because they can wear down over time, making them less effective. Replacement is especially important for adolescents because their mouths continue to grow and teeth continue to develop into adulthood. Athletes who play several sports have new mouth guards made when they go for their six-month

dental checkup. Most dentists reserve time in their daily schedules for emergency patients. Call your dentist and provide as much detail as possible about your condition. Remember, pain is a signal that something is wrong—a problem that will not disappear even if the pain subsides. Here are some tips for dealing with dental emergencies:

Bitten Lip or Tongue

Clean area gently with a cloth and apply cold compresses to reduce swelling. If bleeding doesn't stop, go to a hospital emergency room.

Broken Tooth

Rinse mouth with warm water to clean the area. Use cold compresses on the area to reduce swelling. Call the dentist immediately.

Knocked Out Tooth

Hold the tooth by the crown and rinse off the root of the tooth with water. Do not scrub it or remove attached tissue fragments. If possible, gently insert and hold the tooth in its socket. If that isn't possible, put the tooth in a cup of milk and get to the dentist as quickly as possible. Remember to take the tooth with you!

Website of interest:

The American Dental Association (ADA) has an excellent website to assist consumers, teachers, and media with all of their dental questions and needs along with learning tools and career resources. The site features information concerning "Your Oral Health" as well as "Announcements" pertaining to important oral health topics such as product review, news and federal legislation. Please visit the ADA website at:

<http://www.ada.org>

Did you know?

Ideally children will have their first dental visit before the age of 3 when most of their teeth and molars have come in. A pediatric dentist specializes in knowing what to look for in young children's teeth and how to make them feel comfortable.



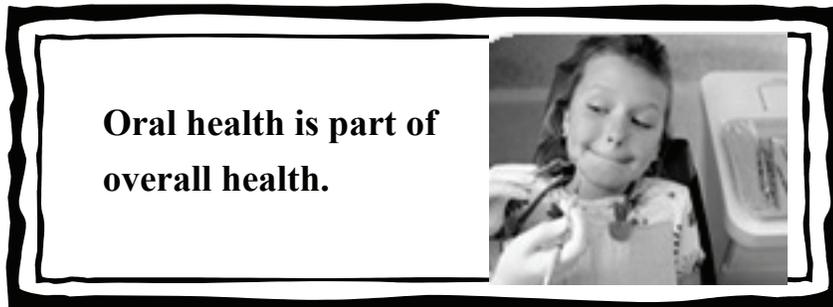


Back to School Checkup

The end of summer signals the beginning of school. In preparing for the new school year we'd like to remind parents and caregivers to include a dental examination as part of their children's routine back-to-school health check-ups and immunizations. All children need and deserve to arrive on the first day of school healthy and ready to learn.

Dental decay is a bacterial infection that, if left untreated, can have serious consequences. In rare cases, an abscessed tooth can even be fatal. A national study released this spring revealed an alarming trend—tooth decay in baby teeth is on the rise, increasing from 24 percent in 1988-1994 to 28 percent in 1999-2005. One factor is believed to be that children are eating more snack foods than ever before and also drinking soda and fruit juices containing large amounts of sugar. More than half of all 5 to 9 year old children have at least one cavity or filling and tooth decay is the most prevalent preventable chronic disease of childhood. Children with untreated health and developmental problems may have trouble concentrating and learning. When a child has serious tooth decay, it can affect overall health and can lead to problems in eating, speaking and paying attention in class, which is why it is important to include an oral health assessment by a dentist as part of the routine back-to-school examination.

It's time we stop severing the mouth from the rest of the body and know that a child is only healthy if both their mouth, as well as their body are healthy.



The best way to start the new school year is with a dental exam, conducted by a dentist. Parents should be encouraged to make a visit to the dental office as part of their child's back-to-school routine. In that way, when it comes time for the class photo to be taken your child will really have something to smile about...and so will you.

NOTICE
Focus on Oral Health is available on our website at <http://www.ndhealth.gov/oralhealth/publications>

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Focus on Oral Health

is published by the

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North Dakota Department of Health
600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 301
Bismarck, N.D. 58505-0200

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