



Fact Sheet

DID YOU KNOW?	CALL TO ACTION!
<p>Tooth decay is <u>the most common chronic infectious disease among children</u>. Once established, the disease requires treatment. A cavity only grows larger and more expensive to repair the longer it remains untreated.</p>	<p>Dental disease is largely preventable. Prevention and health promotion can hold down health care costs and improve quality of life. Smiles Across Minnesota provides dental screenings, sealants and fluoride varnish – things we know are the strongest preventive measures to prevent tooth decay.</p>
<p>Untreated dental disease can be painful and inhibit a child's sleeping, learning, speech, and nutrition.</p>	<p>Early prevention – through diet, correct brushing practices and regular dental check-ups can reduce the effects of tooth decay.</p>
<p>Each year 51 million school hours are lost due to dental disease.</p>	<p>School-based programs are cost effective. School-based dental sealant programs that reach uninsured and underserved children have reduced dental decay by 60 percent over a five-year period.</p>
<p>17 percent of U.S. children ages 2-4 have already experienced decay and 78 percent of children have dental decay by age 17.</p>	<p>Increasing oral health literacy (the degree to which an individual has the capacity to obtain and understand basic oral health information) of adults, teens and children is critical for informed decision-making that can change attitudes and behaviors that improve oral health. Information should be culturally sensitive and appropriate. Smiles Across Minnesota will disburse oral health education materials, to provide basic information as well as to counteract consumer messaging that leads to poor oral health choices.</p>
<p>There are striking disparities in dental disease by income. Poor children suffer twice as much dental caries as their more affluent peers, and their disease is more likely to be untreated. One out of four children in America is born into poverty.</p>	<p>The private sector and public sector each has unique characteristics and strengths. Linking the two can result in a creative synergy capitalizing on the talents and resources of each partner. Strong leadership, commitment and resources are required.</p>
<p>Medical insurance is a strong predictor of access to dental care. Uninsured children are 2.5 times less likely than insured children to receive dental care. Children from families without dental insurance are 3 times more likely to have dental needs than children with either public or private insurance. For each child without medical insurance, there are at least 2.6 children without dental insurance.</p>	<p>A sustained effort is needed to build the nation's oral health infrastructure to ensure that all sectors of society--the public, private practitioners, and federal and state government personnel--have sufficient knowledge, expertise, and resources to design, implement, and monitor oral health programs.</p>
<p>Tooth decay can have unwanted lasting effects on a child's overall health.</p>	<p>Think of good dental care as a component of your overall health care— just like exercising, eating right and taking care of the rest of your body.</p>
<p>In 2005, 46 percent of eligible Minnesota Medicaid children ages 6 to 14 did not receive dental care.</p>	<p>Despite the current crisis in oral health, there is great hope if the larger community supports oral health programs that garner resources effectively.</p>
<p>Children have the right idea about smiling...they smile about 400 times a day.</p>	<p>Help keep your child's smile healthy and beautiful. Start your child now on a lifetime of good dental habits.</p>