



Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Heather Hofmeister
(651) 994-5210
hhofmeister@deltadentalmn.org

Dimitri Senaratna
(651) 994-5275
dsenaratna@deltadentalmn.org

**Annual Tooth Fairy Poll Reveals Dental Habits and
How Much Minnesota Children Can Expect Under Their Pillow**

EAGAN, Minn. (May 4, 2006) – The annual Tooth Fairy poll from Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota (Delta Dental) reports that the current average “gift” Minnesota children receive from the Tooth Fairy is \$1.81, compared to the national average of \$2. Tooth Fairy gift amounts range from a low of 25 cents to a high of \$25 per tooth. The poll also revealed that most Minnesota children are diligent about keeping their teeth clean.

“The Tooth Fairy is a rite of passage in many American households and presents a great opportunity for parents to talk with their children about practicing good dental health habits,” said Dr. Hastreiter. “Re-establishing good dental habits at home, combined with regular dental visits will help children create healthy teeth for a lifetime.”

BRUSHING UP

According to Delta Dental’s poll, which goes out to a sampling of its commercially insured population, 74 percent of parents report that their children brush their teeth twice per day. Also, 91 percent of parents surveyed state their children receive a dental exam every six months. Parents also report that children typically have their first visit to the dentist between the ages of one and four.

“The American Dental Association recommends that parents take their children to the dentist by age one for their first dental health assessment,” said Dr. Richard Hastreiter, vice president of oral health analytics and dental director for Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota. “It is important for parents to know that the frequency of dental visits needs to be determined by the dentist, based on an assessment of the child’s unique oral health needs — rather than on a pre-set schedule. This approach ensures your child receives the most appropriate, timely care.”

SWEET TOOTH

The poll also revealed that 44 percent of parents indicate that their children consume an average of three or more sugar drinks and/or treats per day. “Children can be taught from an early age to eat an orally healthy and nutritious diet,” says Dr. Hastreiter. “Encourage your children to make healthy choices. Teach them to eat a balanced diet and limit in-between meal snacks of foods containing high levels of sugar. This will help promote good dental health as well as overall health.”

(more)

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Dr. Hastreiter offers the following tips for parents with young children:

Dental Hygiene: Set a good example for children by practicing good oral hygiene.

- ❑ Brush and floss daily. Help your children learn proper daily brushing and flossing techniques.
- ❑ Involve children in the selection of the type of toothbrush, dental floss and fluoride toothpaste they use. The more involved, the more likely they will form lasting good oral health habits.
- ❑ Replace your and your child's toothbrush when the bristles bend or look worn — about every two to three months. Children's brushes may have to be replaced more often.

Nutritious Choices: Help children establish healthy habits.

- ❑ Encourage children to make healthy choices. Eat a balanced diet and limit in-between meal snacks of foods containing high levels of sugar.
- ❑ Offer water instead of soft drinks or sugary liquids.
- ❑ Make sure your children drink fluoridated water. Bottled or purified water may not have enough fluoride.
- ❑ Check to see if your school is one of the many schools that now include healthier vending machine options.

Dentist Visits: Schedule children's check-ups with the dentist as needed.

- ❑ Schedule a dentist visit by your child's first birthday.
- ❑ Ask the dentist if your child would benefit from sealants, a plastic coating for the top of back teeth to help prevent decay.
- ❑ Teach children that a mouthguard is priority equipment for participating in any sport that could result in a knocked-out or fractured tooth.
- ❑ Expectant mothers: Visit the dentist for a checkup if you are planning to become pregnant or as soon as you find out you are pregnant. Be sure to tell your dentist if you are pregnant, so that your dentist is aware of your pregnancy before providing treatment or using any medications or x-rays.

Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota's oral health initiatives are part of its broader non-profit mission to provide educational information and support community programs that help enhance the oral health of all Minnesotans.

About Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota

An innovator in oral health benefit plans, Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota is an independently operated, nonprofit dental services company that administers self-insured and prepaid dental service plans. Delta Dental serves more than 8,600 employer groups with more than 3.3 million members in Minnesota and across the nation. Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota is headquartered in Eagan, and has a customer service center on Minnesota's Iron Range. *For more information, visit www.deltadentalmn.org.*

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