

Draft 4 FINAL DRAFT
July 22, 2009

ECHO Questions and Answers

18 Minute Conversation "Healthy Teeth for Children"

- 1. Today we're talking about dental care for children. Tell us, why is dental care so critical for young children? Why is it important in our culture?**

Sample Answer:

- Dental health affects the health of the rest of your body.
- The bacteria in your mouth can cause dental decay and gum disease.
- When we teach children healthy habits at a young age, they continue these into adulthood.
- Think of dental health as important to your health as exercising and eating well.

- 2. Why is it so important to start taking care of babies dental health? Aren't their baby teeth just going to fall out?**

Sample Answer:

- Baby teeth are important.
- They allow the child to chew properly.
- They maintain space for the later eruption of the permanent teeth
- They are needed for proper speech development.
- Children need their baby teeth to eat properly, smile, talk and feel good about themselves.
- Dental bacteria in the mouth can cause children to get a chronic disease called tooth decay or cavities.
- Tooth decay can pass from person to person.
- It can be painful, and cause a child to get sick enough to require emergency room treatment.
- Teaching children good dental health habits early will help them continue these healthy habits when they get older.

3. The video says to begin by cleaning babies gums. Why do we need to start so young?

Sample Answer:

- It's important to start caring for baby's mouths before their first teeth even come in.
- Germs can form in the mouth before teeth come in.
- It also helps the baby get used to having his or her mouth cleaned.
- The bacteria that causes tooth decay (cavities) can be spread from parent to child.

4. How can we care for baby's mouths?

Sample Answer:

- Wipe your baby's gums with a wet wash cloth or a wet gauze pad.
- If your child is teething, give your baby a teething ring to chew on.
- Don't allow your child to fall asleep with a bottle containing any liquid except water. (It is okay to feed a child before bedtime.)
- When the first tooth comes in, begin brushing it and see your dentist.

5. You mentioned avoiding sugar. Why is this? What role does diet play in healthy teeth?

Sample Answer:

- It's important to limit sugar and some carbohydrates that turn into sugar.
- Sugar turns into an acid when it is mixed with germs that is found in plaque on teeth and causes tooth decay.
- What matters for dental health is *how often* your child has sugar, but quantity is also important.
- Avoid eating in-between meals and sugary snacks and drinks, including juice. Some examples of healthy snacks are yogurt, cheese, and vegetables.
- Some examples of snacks that are bad for teeth are crackers and cookies, ice cream and candy, soda, fruit juice, and sticky foods like caramels.

6. What should I do if there is a medical emergency with my child's dental health?

Sample Answer:

- Call your dentist right away.
- Usually your dentist can see your child within 24 hours in the event of an emergency.
- If you don't have a dentist, or health insurance, there are options for you. Visit www.echominnesota.org for additional information.

7. What should we do if a tooth is knocked out ?

Sample Answer:

- If it is a baby tooth, save the tooth and call your dentist.
- If it is a permanent tooth (not a baby tooth), try to gently place the tooth back in the socket or
- Put it in milk
- And see your dentist right away! (within 30 minutes)

8. The video said brushing and flossing are important. How do these habits like brushing and flossing help?

Sample Answer:

- Brushing your child's teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste strengthens enamel, the coating on the outside of the tooth.
- Flossing between teeth will help remove harmful bacteria.
- Limiting sugary foods and drinks (and some carbohydrates like crackers and chips) will help prevent tooth decay, because sugars turn to acid, when mixed with plaque which harms teeth.

9. How do you teach your children these habits? Is there a right way to brush and floss?

NOTE TO HOSTS AND GUESTS: Demonstrate brushing and flossing with props.

Sample Answer:

- Begin by having your children watch you brush and floss.
- Help your child brush use a soft, child-size toothbrush until they are able to brush themselves (at about age 10 years old).
- Use a pea-sized dab of toothpaste and use small circular strokes.
- Encourage your child to spit out the toothpaste.
- Brush all sides of the teeth, which can take about 2 minutes in total.
- Glide the floss between teeth. Gently rub the sides of the tooth, curving around the tooth at the gum line.

10. What else can parents do to protect their children's teeth?

Sample Answer:

- Tooth decay can occur as soon as teeth appear in the mouth.
- Once a month parents can "lift the lip" and look inside their child's mouth. Look for a change in the color of the teeth (white or brown lines), holes in the tooth surface, broken or chipped teeth, and swollen or bleeding gums.
- If you notice any changes, call your dentist.

11. What if a child resists brushing and flossing their teeth? Or if they're afraid of going to the dentist?

Sample Answer:

- Try to make dental care fun.
- You can find colorful kids toothbrushes with cartoon characters.
- Try toothpaste flavors the child likes- but remember to only use a pea sized amount
- Encourage your child by saying "Good job!" and "What a great tooth-brusher you are!"
- Find a fun and playful song that is about 2 minutes long to brush along with.
- Prepare your child for going to the dentist by playing a game of "dentist" or reading kids books about the dentist.
- Consider bringing your child to the dental visit of an older child, and talk to him or her about it.

12. How often should children visit the dentist? And how does the dentist help?

Sample Answer:

- Take your child to the dentist when the first tooth comes in, or by the first birthday, whichever comes first.
- Make a dental visit as often as the dentist recommends or about every six months, depending on the needs of the child.
- The visit may include, a gentle, examination of the teeth, gums, jaws, bite and tissue in the mouth, and possibly x-rays and fluoride treatments. The treatment done will vary with the age of the child.
- The purpose of the dentist visit is to identify dental problems, and suggest what can be done.
- Monitor the child's growth and development.
- The dentist will give you advice on how to care for your child's teeth, and discuss the importance of a healthy diet.
- Follow the dentist's instructions.

13. Are there other dental treatments that a dentist might recommend to prevent tooth decay?

- Two dental treatments that are used for some children are fluoride varnish and sealants.
- Your dentist will be able to tell you if they are right for your child.

14. What are some options for families who struggle to afford dental care?

Sample Answer:

- Dental insurance can often help cover care.
- If you don't have dental insurance there are still places you can go to receive care for your children.
- Some organizations offer services at reduced rates or on a sliding scale.
- Children's Dental Services provides dental care across Minnesota. For residents of Minnesota, Children's Dental Services accepts all forms of public and private insurance, including
 - Medical Assistance,
 - Assured Access and
 - Minnesota Care
- CDS also provides dental care to uninsured children and pregnant women.
- CDS is a medical assistance outstation and works to help uninsured families apply and obtain public insurance.
- CDS has a sliding scale discount program for low income families that are not eligible for public insurance.
- Please contact CDS for additional information at 612-746-1530 or at their website: www.childrensdentalservices.org.
- For more information and links to organizations, visit www.echominnesota.org.

15. What else would you like to share on this subject?