



NEWS RELEASE

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June 2003

Handouts Address Care of Kids Teeth

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has developed two handouts for parents regarding early care for their children's teeth: *Brush Up on Healthy Teeth* and *Pediatric Oral Health Tips*.

These fliers were derived from the report, *Recommendations for Using Fluoride to Prevent and Control Dental Caries in the United States*, published in August 17, 2001, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. The intent of these handouts is to educate parents regarding the importance of cleaning baby teeth as soon as they erupt and to supervise tooth brushing until the child can master the skill independently, which typically is not until school age.

Parents should be familiar with all the resources of fluoride in the child's diet, (i.e. city water vs. well water) the CDC advised. Parents should also make sure the child is receiving an appropriate amount of fluoride to prevent dental caries and at the same time avoiding fluorosis (white spots on the teeth). The critical period to avoid too much fluoride exposure is while the crowns of the permanent teeth are forming (from birth through age 6). Parents need to ensure that the child is not swallowing fluoridated toothpaste or any fluoride mouth rinse during this critical tooth development. Several infant/toddler fluoride-free have been developed recently to prevent swallowing too much fluoride during the early years of tooth brushing.

Most children who have mastered spitting out their toothpaste receive an adequate of fluoride to help prevent dental caries if they drink fluoridated water and use a pea-size amount of fluoridated toothpaste twice a day. Parents should consult their pediatricians or dentist regarding their child's exposure individual risk for dental cavities and specific fluoride needs. In children with a high risk for dental caries and exposure to only water without fluoride, additional fluoride supplements may be indicated.

Print copies of the CDC report can be ordered by contacting the Superintendent of Documents, US Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 20402, or by calling (202) 512-1800. To read the report online visit <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5014al.htm>.

Source: Sheri Zidenburg-Cherr, PhD: Nutrition Perspectives, 22/2, March/April 2003