Why is oral health so important?

Oral health and school success are connected

- Tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease.
- Kids miss 51 million hours of school every year due to oral health problems (many of which are easily preventable).[1]
- Students who are absent miss critical instruction time, especially in early grades where reading skills are a focus.
- Kids who have experienced recent oral health pain are 4 times more likely to have lower grade point averages in high school than kids who haven't.[2]
- Kids with dental problems have trouble smiling, speaking, sleeping and learning at school.

Help your child show up for school every day healthy and ready to learn by developing good oral health habits early!

1 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General—Executive Summary. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, National Institutes of Health, 2000.

2 Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC. Poor Oral Health Can Mean Missed School, Lower Grades. August 2012.

Finding and paying for dental care

It's important to find a dentist who makes your whole family feel comfortable. To find a dentist in your area, check out these websites:

Michigan Department of Community Health*
Find out in 30 minutes or less if you or your children are eligible for dental care coverage!
healthcare4mi.com/michild-web

Delta Dental of Michigan's online dentist search tool
www.deltadentalmi.com/findadentist

State of Michigan's Oral Health Directory*
www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch/oral_health_directory_302799_7.pdf

Michigan Dental Association*
www.smilemichigan.com/FindaDentist

Michigan Academy of Pediatric Dentistry*
michiganapd.org/?page_id=239

To download a copy of the entire *From Drool to School* book and to watch a cool 4-minute oral health video that your child will love, go to:
www.deltadentalmi.com/brighterfutures

**The linked pages and contained content are not products or publications from Delta Dental. Delta Dental is not responsible for inaccuracies in the listings and does not recommend, sponsor, or endorse any particular providers listed within, and does not make any representations, provide any warranties, or assume any liability or responsibility relating to the services provided. The listing is provided as a courtesy only.*

6233–MI v3

PA 4/15

From Drool to School

Tips for caring for your child's oral health from the drool years through school years.

DELTA DENTAL®

Drool years

Newborns and infants

- **Keep baby's gums clean and healthy**—massage gums with a damp washcloth after each feeding to keep gums and mouth clean and healthy.
- **Stop the spread of germs and cavity-causing bacteria**—do not share cups, silverware, etc. with your baby.
- **Teething can cause sore gums**—try offering your baby something cool like a cold teething ring or wet washcloth to ease soreness.
- **Visit the dentist early**—your baby's first visit should happen by his/her first birthday.

Preschool years

Toddlers and preschoolers

- **Toothbrushing is important**—use a smear of fluoridated toothpaste for children between the ages of 3–6 (rice-sized amount for children younger than 3) and a soft child-sized toothbrush. Brushing should begin when the first tooth erupts. Replace toothbrushes every 4 months.
- **Visit the dentist regularly**—your child should visit the dentist at least once a year for a checkup.
- **Sucking can become a bad habit**—wean your child off the bottle at around 12 to 18 months and encourage an end to thumb sucking and pacifier use before age 4.
- **Sip all day, and the teeth will pay**—don't let your child carry around or nap with a sippy cup that contains juice, milk or other sweetened drinks as it will lead to cavities.
- **Drink tap water**—drinking fluoridated water is a great way to fight tooth decay and cavities. Because most bottled water does not contain fluoride, it's better to drink tap water.

School years

Elementary-aged children

- **A healthy school lunch is important**—be sure to pack fruits/veggies and protein such as peanut butter, cheese, turkey or roast beef. Avoid juice, sports drinks or soda pop—water is best.
- **Protect teeth**—kids who play sports should wear mouth guards.
- **Sealants are a great way to prevent cavities**—ask your dentist about them when you visit.
- **Get ready for the tooth fairy**—kids usually lose their baby teeth between the ages of 6–12.
- **Stop the spread of germs**—don't share toothbrushes, toothpaste or bathroom drinking glasses, and wash hands before and after brushing.
- **Keep your dentist's phone number handy**—dental emergencies are very common among active kids.