

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Make dentist visits the rule for back-to-school

Good oral health helps keep kids focused in classroom

DENVER (August 22, 2012) – Along with an annual physical, clothes and backpacks, Delta Dental of Colorado suggests adding a visit to the dentist to your child’s back-to-school list this fall.

Dental professionals recommend biannual visits for most children, and the end of summer is an ideal time because it follows a season in which kids have indulged in treats like soda, ice cream and cotton candy.

“The school day is no time for a child to be distracted by tooth pain,” says Dr. Michael Makoto Okuji, DDS, dental director for Delta Dental of Colorado. “Scheduling a dental visit during back-to-school time helps ensure that a child won’t be distracted by dental disease or pain in class. In addition, the dentist can provide age-appropriate wellness guidance and advice. It’s also the perfect time to get a mouthguard made for those participating in fall sports.”

Dental decay is one of the most common childhood diseases, with more than half of children ages 5 to 9 having had at least one cavity or filling. Dental visits help with the early detection and treatment of dental disease and promote the importance of a healthy mouth for school readiness and learning.

Untreated dental problems can be painful and embarrassing, and can harm a child’s educational and social development. Each year, more than 51 million school hours are lost by students whose dental-related illnesses cause them to stay home or seek care.

The good news is that tooth decay is nearly 100 percent preventable, but can develop any time after teeth appear in the mouth. “So it’s important to begin good oral health habits, like visiting the dentist, when children are very young,” said Dr. Okuji. “That’s why dentists and pediatricians recommend that a child’s first visit to the dentist is within six months of getting the first tooth – and no later than the first birthday.”

While regular dental visits are extremely important, good oral health for children starts at home with proper dental hygiene and diet. The daily one-two punch of brushing twice with fluoride toothpaste and flossing once is still the foundation for maintaining healthy teeth and gums. Very young children (ages 1 to 5) are particularly prone to tooth decay and parents should supervise (or actually brush) to make sure they do a good job. A diet light on sugary snacks and drinks and rich in fruits and vegetables goes a long way toward maintaining good oral and overall health.

For more information about establishing good oral health habits for a lifetime of healthy smiles, visit www.MonthlyMouthfulCO.com or “like” Delta Dental of Colorado on Facebook at www.facebook.com/DeltaDentalCO.

About Delta Dental of Colorado

Delta Dental of Colorado is the largest and most experienced provider of dental benefits in the state. As a not-for-profit, Delta Dental of Colorado invests in oral health projects through the Delta Dental of Colorado Foundation that focus on access to care, prevention, education and research. The Colorado company is a member of the Delta Dental Plans Association, a national organization of not-for-profit Delta Dental plans. The national association is the largest dental benefits carrier in the nation providing coverage to more than 56 million people in nearly 95,700 employer groups.