



## Children's Oral Health Fact Sheet

- More than 51 million school hours are lost each year because of dental-related illness.
- The oral health of children has improved significantly over the past few decades.
- Today most American children enjoy excellent oral health, but a significant subset suffers a high level of oral disease. The most advanced disease is found primarily among children living in poverty, some racial/ethnic minority populations, disabled children, and children with HIV infection.
- We know enough about health promotion and disease prevention measures to improve the oral health and well-being of all children.
- Tooth decay remains one of the most common diseases of childhood – 5 times as common as asthma and 7 times as common as hay fever.
- More than half of children aged 5-9 have had at least one cavity or filling; 78 percent of 17-year-olds have experienced tooth decay.
- By age 17, more than 7 percent of children have lost at least one permanent tooth to decay.
- Each year, 8,000 babies are born with cleft lip and/or cleft palate, making these among the most common birth defects. Cleft lip and cleft palate interfere with normal appearance, eating, and speech.
- Injuries to children, intentional and non-intentional, often involve trauma to the head, neck, and mouth. The leading causes of oral and head injuries are sports, violence, falls, and motor vehicle crashes.
- Tobacco-related oral lesions are common in teenagers who use spit (smokeless) tobacco. The lesions occur in 35 percent of snuff users and 20 percent of chewing tobacco users.
- One in four American children are born into poverty (annual income of \$17,000 or less for a family of four). Children and adolescents living in poverty suffer twice as much tooth decay as their more affluent peers, and their disease is more likely to go untreated.
- Children from families without medical insurance are 2.5 times less likely than insured children to receive dental care. Children from families without dental insurance are 3 times more likely than insured children to have unmet dental needs.
- For every child without medical insurance, there are 2.6 who lack dental insurance.
- Fewer than one in five Medicaid-covered children had a preventive dental visit during a recent year-long study.
- The daily reality for children with untreated oral disease is often persistent pain, inability to eat comfortably or chew well, embarrassment at discolored and damaged teeth, and distraction from play and learning.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention