



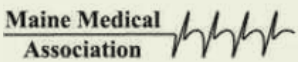
Maine Chapter
of the
American Academy
of Pediatrics



Maine Academy
of
Family
Physicians



Maine
Dental
Association



Maine
Medical
Association



Maine
Osteopathic
Association

Dear Fellow Health Professionals,

August, 2008

Dental caries is the most common chronic childhood disease in Maine and in the country. It is a transmissible bacterial infection that is five times more common than asthma, and the prevalence of diseased baby teeth is increasing. The consequences of untreated caries range from inadequate nutrition to poor school performance to, in rare but real cases, death.

As a reflection of both the significance of the problem and passionate belief in the need to improve the oral health of young children in Maine, the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Maine Academy of Family Physicians, the Maine Dental Association, the Maine Medical Association, and the Maine Osteopathic Association are working together in support of and in cooperation with three prevention focused initiatives. All three initiatives strive to reduce early childhood caries (ECC) and establish an early dental home for children. To be successful, the three projects described below will need your help and participation.

Kids Oral Health Partnership, through a grant from the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau, will provide training to non-dental health care providers to recognize ECC, assess the risk of ECC, educate the family and refer to a dentist when appropriate.

From The First Tooth, an initiative of the Sadie and Harry Davis Foundation, is working to integrate oral health assessment, fluoride varnish treatments, and parent/caregiver counseling regarding good oral health practices into the medical and social service settings where children from birth to 3 years of age receive services. The program is currently conducting a pilot with five partner organizations, providing training, educational materials, and funding.

Oral Health Risk Assessment in the Pediatric Practice, a project of the Maine Chapter of the AAP, will work with two pediatric practices and early head start staff to provide early oral health risk assessment.

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentists recommends that every child have a dental home by age one. For many children, the primary health care setting will need to serve as a first dental home until age three, unless urgent identified need requires the services of a dentist sooner.

All of us in the health care community who see young children and their families have a role to play. We must work together to:

- Provide an oral health assessment for babies and young children.
- Provide anticipatory guidance for parents on issues such as prenatal care, weaning, frequency of snacking, self-assessment at home and use of fluoride toothpaste for daily brushing.
- Evaluate the need for systemic and topical fluoride supplementation and anti-bacterial agents like xylitol and chlorhexidine.
- Provide a fluoride varnish treatment when appropriate, as fluoride can prevent and arrest early tooth decay.
- Refer young children seen in health care practices to the dentist when dental treatment is needed.
- Make room in dental practices to receive these referrals and provide dental treatment to young children.

We urge all of our colleagues to join us in this vitally important early prevention effort. The projects listed above can help train providers to have the skills necessary and provide the materials you need to incorporate oral health into your practice.

Caries is a highly preventable disease. Working together we can make a huge impact with a very little time and cost.

Sincerely,

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