

# *Oral Health In Children*

## *The Problem*

- Dental caries, or cavities, as they are commonly known, is the most common chronic childhood disease. Although the disease is most prevalent among certain ethnic groups and poor or lower class children, every child in America is at risk for dental caries.
- Fluoridation of public water supply greatly reduces the amount of caries in a population, yet not all communities have embraced this preventive measure in dental care.
- Dental sealants for children are very effective in preventing the onset of caries in children, yet some children do not have the resources for acquiring them.

## *Healthy People 2010*

- Dental caries is the single most common chronic disease of childhood, occurring five to eight times as frequently as asthma, the second most chronic disease in children.
- Millions of people in the United States experience dental caries and periodontal diseases, resulting in needless pain and suffering; difficulty in speaking, chewing, and swallowing; increased costs of care; loss of self-esteem; decreased economic productivity through lost work and school days.
- Community water fluoridation grew rapidly from its inception in 1945 until about 1980; since then, the proportion of the U.S. population living in communities with fluoridated water supplies has remained at 60 to 62 percent. About 100 million people still lack the benefits of community water fluoridation. The Healthy People 2010 target is for 75% of all people in the United States to have fluoridated community water systems.
- The percentage of school-aged children with dental sealants has risen in recent years as the public and private sectors increasingly use the procedure, dental insurance pays for dental sealants, and parents request sealants for their children. No increase, however, has occurred among children in low-income populations. Healthy People 2010 hopes to have 50% of all children, 6-19 years of age, with dental sealants.

## *Epidemiological Picture of the Issue*

- In the state of Connecticut, 87.5% of the population on public water supply is receiving fluoridated water.

- In the state of Massachusetts, 53.3% of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students have dental sealants.
- In the state of Massachusetts, 48.8% of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students have reported tooth decay.
- In the United States, 50% of all children in the second grade and 80% of all high school seniors have caries.
- The amount of money it takes to fluoridate the water for one individual, over their lifetime, costs less than the amount of the treatment for one cavity. For every dollar invested in water fluoridation, it yields a \$38.00 savings each year for fewer cavities treated.

### Solution to the Problem

- Fluoridation of the water in communities is a key factor in lessening the percentage of children with tooth decay. If a community is unable to implement a water system then the school can opt to have a fluoridation program within the school. A dental professional can come into the school once a week or month and distribute fluoride to the children.
- Dental sealants are not available to all children due to high dental costs and insurance issues. In some counties across America, they have implemented a sealant program in at-risk schools, where they receive funding to have the children's teeth protected by sealants as well as have volunteer dental professionals to administer the sealants.

### INTERNET RESOURCES

- [www.ada.com](http://www.ada.com) - The American Dental Association
- [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) - The Center for Disease Control & Prevention
- [www.healthypeople.gov/Document/HTML/Volume2/21Oral.htm](http://www.healthypeople.gov/Document/HTML/Volume2/21Oral.htm) - Healthy People 2010
- [www.adha.com](http://www.adha.com) - American Dental Hygienists Association

<i>Back to Betty C. Jung's Web site</i>	<a href="http://www.bettycjung.net/">http://www.bettycjung.net/</a>
<i>Back to Fact Sheet Directory</i>	<a href="http://www.bettycjung.net/Pch202fs.htm">http://www.bettycjung.net/Pch202fs.htm</a>

## **Bibliography**

- Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. (2005).* Retrieved September 21, 2005, from <http://www.antch.org>
- Causes of Dental Caries. In *Wrong Diagnosis. (2004).* Retrieved September 19, 2005, from [http://www.wrongdiagnosis.com/d/dental\\_caries.causes.htm](http://www.wrongdiagnosis.com/d/dental_caries.causes.htm)
- Children's Oral Health. (2005). In *The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.* Retrieved September 25, 2005, from: <http://www.cdc.gov/OralHealth/factsheets.sgr2000-fs3.htm>
- Dental Health Program. (2005). In *Sacramento County Department of Health & Human Services, Division of Public Health.* Retrieved September 21, 2005, from <http://sacdhhs.com/article.asp?ContentID=69>
- Give Kids A Smile ®. (2005). In *American Dental Association.* Retrieved September 21, 2005 from [http://www.ada.org/prof/events/featured/gkas/2006\\_content\\_group.asp](http://www.ada.org/prof/events/featured/gkas/2006_content_group.asp)
- Mckenzie, J.F., Pinger, R.R., & Kotecki, J.E. (2005) *An Introduction to Community Health, Fifth Edition.* Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.
- Oral Health. In *Healthy People 2010. (2000).* Retrieved September 19, 2005, from <http://www.healthypeople.gov/Document/HTML/Volume2/21Oral.htm>
- Weinberg, M.A., & Westphal, C.R. (2001). *Comprehensive Periodontics for the Dental Hygienist.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.