Baby Tooth Decay on the Rise

Tooth decay is a painful and costly problem and, according to a report released last week by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, most adults in the United States are happily experiencing less of this pain in the mouth than ever. Unfortunately, the same study shows tooth decay for children is on the rise. The report, "Trends in Oral Health Status: United States, 1988-1994 and 1999-2004," is the most comprehensive assessment of oral health data to date and shows that tooth decay for children ages two to five increased from 24 percent to 28 percent.

Because primary teeth, or baby teeth, are inevitably replaced by permanent ones, it can be tempting to dismiss the increase in tooth decay among young children. But experts warn that the damage a child suffers from early tooth decay can have lasting effects. "Tooth decay at a young age endangers the well-being of the child at later ages. Early tooth loss can lead to crowding, delayed eruption of permanent teeth, and can begin a lifetime of dental anxiety," said Nancy Reifel, an Assistant Researcher at the UCLA Schools of Public Health and Community Dentistry.

Experts agree that the negative trend in tooth decay among young children is preventable. "Tooth decay in primary teeth is caused by a combination of things, including poor diet, a lack of oral hygiene, a lack of exposure to fluoride and not having access to dental services," said Dr. Marvin Marcus, a Professor of Public Health and Community Dentistry at UCLA Schools of Dentistry and Public Health.

Reifel reminds that sweet snacks like raisins, cereals, and peanut butter-and-jelly sandwiches can promote tooth decay and should be avoided. Parents must moderate their child's diet, help their child brush daily, and seek dental care immediately if they become aware of problems. Also, children should start to visit the dentist by age 1.

To address this issue, First 5 LA has recently partnered with community health insurance administrator L.A. Care to offer free dental services to children ages 0-5. Through six grantee sites, the Oral Health Initiative expects to serve more than 10,000 children by 2009.

For more information on how to access a children's dentist call (888) FIRST5LA.
May 18, 8:30am-4:00pm: Fussy Babies, Caring Parents with Linda Gilkerson, Ph.D. presented by Project ABC at Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, 555 West Temple, Los Angeles CA 90012. Workshop explores the Fussy Baby Network approach and fulfills 6.5 credits of continuing education. $115 or $130 (w/CE), continental breakfast and lunch box provided. Visit www.uscucedd.org and go to Events to download the registration form.

May 19, 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m.: 4th Annual Community Resource Fair, at Rowen Avenue Elementary School 600 S. Rowen Ave., Los Angeles 90023. Call Mari Flores (323) 261-7191.

May 19, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.: Child Care Resource Center’s Annabelle’s Play Day at Los Angeles Valley College, 5800 Fulton Ave., Valley Glen 91401. Free family event with games, music, face painting, dancing, etc. Call (818) 788-6850 or visit www.paclac.org and go to Upcoming Seminars for registration.

May 25, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.: The Natural Laws of Breastfeeding: New Paradigms and Teaching Tools with Nancy Mohrbacher presented by the Breastfeeding Taskforce of Greater Los Angeles, Northridge Hospital Medical Center, 18300 Roscoe Blvd., Northridge. Call Debbie Cowley at (213) 596-5776 or visit www.breastfeedla.org and go to Upcoming Seminars for registration.

June 6-8: Infant/Toddler Training Institute for Higher Education Faculty: California’s Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Program Guidelines and Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations at the Ayres Hotel in Hawthorne, CA. Fellowships available. Contact Amy Schustz at (415) 289-2303 or schustz@wested.org. Open solely to California higher education faculty teaching courses in early childhood development and care.

June 7, 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.: PAC/LAC Annual Conference - Quality of Life for Families XI: Improving the Outcomes of Pregnancy at the Burbank Airport Marriott Hotel and Convention Center, 2500 Hollywood Way, Burbank 91505. Visit www.paclac.org or contact (818) 788-6850 or info@paclac.org.

June 16, 8:30am-4:00pm: American Diabetes Association’s Diabetes Expo at the Long Beach Convention Center 300 East Ocean Blvd., Long Beach 90802. Free health screenings, entertainment and more. Visit www.diabetes.org/losangelesexpo.

June 25, 9:00am - 4:00pm: Depression and the Breastfeeding Woman presented by the Breastfeeding Task Force of Greater Los Angeles at San Gabriel Valley Medical Center's Community Health and Education Center, 261 Junipero Serra Dr., San Gabriel, CA. For more information call Debbie Cowley at (213) 596-5776 or visit www.breastfeedla.org and go to Upcoming Seminars for registration.

P-5 Asset Mapping Project Initiates Childcare Data Collection

An unprecedented effort to create web-based mapping tools for planning and policy leaders in the Los Angeles childcare community is now underway. Staff from the Healthy City/First 5 LA partnership, known as the Prenatal to 5 Asset Mapping Project, met with seasoned childcare representatives last Thursday to begin ramping up the mapping project. Also participating in the ambitious effort are representatives from the LA County Office of Childcare, local Resource and Referral agencies and the California Community Care Licensing Division, along with LAUP and First 5 LA staff.

As part of the prenatal through five asset mapping project, the gathering and mapping of vital childcare data will ultimately enable geographic overlaying of childcare investments with community social indicators. It will also help identify childcare services available in target communities and link childcare services with other available and related services.

"Ultimately this project will provide policy makers with the data to assess children needs in an easy to use, interactive way," says Efren Aguilar, Research Analyst at Healthy City, "This project builds on the growing data sharing movement in L.A. County".

The cohesive and cooperative dynamic among attendees enabled an easy sharing process to occur. With a plethora of quality and comprehensive data to work with, the team identified many ways to use existing data to create one of the most powerful planning tools in the County.

For more about the Prenatal to 5 Asset Mapping Project, call Amado Ulloa at 213-482-5902.

GRANTEE PROFILE

Hyde Park Ready for School Nurseries Whole Families

When Ofelia Castro started attending English-as-a-second language classes at Hyde Park’s Family Resource Center, she had no idea how much it would end up helping her 2-year-old son William. Because Hyde Park provides childcare so parents can easily attend classes, William was placed in the arms of Early Childhood Education Specialist Winnie Doeman, who immediately noticed his speech delay. William was soon referred to a speech therapist through South Central Regional Center. Four months later he is a different, more confident child.

"I just thought he was a really fussy toddler," said Ofelia, "but when he started learning more words with the speech therapist, he stopped fussing and started exploring." Now the whole family is involved in helping William build his words. And Ofelia’s increased English-speaking abilities enable her to better help her son’s language development.
The importance of positive communication skills with children cannot be underestimated. The recent release of an audio recording of actor Alec Baldwin harshly criticizing his daughter for missing a telephone appointment reminds us of how, in anger, parents can say harmful and destructive things to their children. This is of critical concern because children can develop their sense of self-worth based on how you communicate with them. So being present and choosing your words carefully is vital. At First 5 LA we recommend the following methods when talking to children:

- Listen with your eyes, not just your ears. Watch carefully for responses because children can be indirect.
- If a child is trying to express an emotion, ask about it and request feedback.
- Rephrase what you think a child is saying by using - "I" statements, "You" message and emotional descriptors.
- Try not to let your own feelings limit your child’s sense of being free to express her/himself. Be non-judgmental if s/he needs help limiting her/his expressions.
- Aim for praise to outnumber correction by a 10 to 1 ratio.

Also, if you find yourself over-stressed and tempted to lash out at a child with words, take a break and breathe deeply. Children do not have the resources that adults do to recover from harsh words, so a regrettable outburst may be more difficult to mend with a child. For more helpful tips on positive communication skills go to www.brightfutures.org.

"With the help of this program, I am confident that William will grow to be an excellent scholar," says Ofelia.

"We believe that school readiness starts with the family," says Deborah Hayes, Hyde Parks Program Coordinator. "If a child's family is homeless, jobless, or struggling - addressing those needs is our first order of business."

Hayes' training as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker gives her a unique skill to identify emotional stress as a block to school readiness. She is often tasked with helping address families' basic needs in an underserved community. By offering a panoply of programs and services, Hyde Park is up to the task of meeting families' needs.

Programs at the center range from family nutrition, parent literacy support, immigration, dental care, asthma, gun violence prevention, a drop-in reading program and others. The center also offers bus tokens, job referrals, childcare, free children's books, supportive counseling and crisis intervention. An on-staff Case Manager and USC social work interns work with families to help customize support.

Hayes works continuously to partner with private companies and other organizations to enhance the center’s network. Just last December she coordinated the donation of 400 high chairs and car seats for families from The Today Show. The most recent partnership with the Pasadena Birthing Project, a mentoring program for pregnant women, is the next step in supporting families. Look for more information on the Pasadena Birthing Project in next week's Monday Morning Report.

For more information about the center call 323-753-4551.

CHAMPION PROFILE
Newly Appointed Rafael López Takes City by Storm

Rafael López, who was recently appointed by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa to serve as the next Executive Director of the Los Angeles Commission for Children Youth and Their Families (CCYF), has worked for over 12 years as a leader in both the public and private sector advocating for children and their families. In his last six months as interim Director, Rafael has built relationships throughout the city, including with First 5 LA and LAUP to achieve CCYF’s goal of having all children in Los Angeles reach adulthood having experienced a safe, healthy and nurturing childhood. Rafael initiated last month’s Week of the Young Child event in City Hall.

Prior to coming to CCYF, Rafael served as Deputy Director of San Francisco’s Department of Children, Youth and Their Families. He was also the founding Executive Director of the then-Santa Cruz County Children and Families Commission, now First 5 Santa Cruz.
Nationally admired for his passion and commitment to the well-being of children, youth and families, Lopez was selected earlier this year to be a Children and Families Fellow with the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Previously he held another Fellowship at Stanford University’s Graduate School of Business, Center for Social Innovation.

Lopez holds a Masters degree in Public Administration from Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government. He lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Rosa Ramírez-López, and son, Adán Miguel.

**Which book has most influenced your life?**
Any work of Langston Hughes.

**What makes you happy?**
The sound of my son’s and wife's laughter.

**What is your favorite way to spend time with an important child or children in your life?**
Singing silly songs and dancing crazy dances with my son, my nieces, and nephews.

**What is the greatest challenge the children and families of LA County face today?**
A recent study by the Harvard School of Public Health cites that, "Of the nation’s largest metropolitan areas, the Los Angeles region has some of the worst indicators of well being for children and families in the nation." Unacceptable - we must do better, not just "more".

**Which living figure do you most admire and why?**
My mother, María Concepción López. Humble and selfless, she has endured challenges that would have destroyed the spirit of most others.

**What is your motto?**
"Caminante, no hay camino. Se hace el camino al andar...." - Antonio Machado