

Children's Dental Disease - Fact Sheet

Too many children suffer from dental disease

- Dental disease is the single most common chronic childhood disease — **five** times more common than asthma and **seven** times more common than hay fever.ⁱ
- Dental disease is so widespread and the health effects so significant that the U.S. Surgeon General has classified dental disease as a silent epidemic.ⁱⁱ
- The most recent national survey shows that the rate of dental disease among children is increasing. Among children age two to five years, dental disease increased from 24 to 28 percent between 1988-1994 and 1999-2004.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Too many young children in Washington state have tooth decay:
 - 40% of low-income preschoolers have decay.
 - 58% of 3rd graders have decay.^{iv}



Dental disease prevention needs to begin at an early age

- 29% of children under age 2 enrolled in Washington's Medicaid program visited a dentist in 2011.^v
- On average, children visit a physician **8 times** for well-child checkups before age three. These visits are opportune times to deliver oral health preventive services.

The consequences and costs of dental disease are significant

- Poor oral health of children has been related to poor performance in school, poor social relationships and less success in later life. If children are in pain, it distracts them from concentrating on schoolwork. Low- and moderate-income children miss a disproportionate amount of school due to dental disease.^{vi}
- Children with severe dental decay often need to be treated in a hospital operating room, typically costing over **\$10,000** per child.^{vii}
- In 2010, the state Medicaid program spent more than \$87 million treating children for dental disease.^{viii}
- Poor oral health has been linked to diabetes, heart disease and other long-term health problems.^{ix}

Sources:

- ⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General*. 2000.
- ⁱⁱ Ibid.
- ⁱⁱⁱ B.A. Dye et al., *Trends in Oral Health Status: United States, 1988-1994 and 199-2004*, April 2007, http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_11/sr11_248.pdf
- ^{iv} Washington State Department of Health, *Washington State Smile Survey 2010* (Olympia: Office of Maternal and Child Health, Pub No 160-099).
- ^v Washington State Health Care Authority, *Medicaid Dental Services Utilization Report, Fiscal Year 2011*.
- ^{vi} National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, as cited in US General Accounting Offices, *Oral Health: Dental Disease is a Chronic Problem Among Low-Income Populations*. HEHS-00-72. April 2000.
- ^{vii} Joel Berg, Director of Dentistry, Seattle Children's Hospital, personal communication, April 2011.
- ^{viii} Washington State Health Care Authority, *Medicaid Dental Services Utilization Data Children Birth through 20 Years*, Fiscal Years 2010, Olympia.
- ^{ix} U.S. DHHS *Oral Health in America*.