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**Introduction**

Dental decay remains the single most common chronic childhood disease in the nation. It is five times more common than asthma and seven times more common than hay fever. Children with poor oral health status are more likely to experience problems with oral health when they reach adulthood.

According to the 1999 Maine State Smile Survey, one third of kindergarten children (31.4%) and almost half of third graders (44.7%) have had dental decay. Nearly one in five kindergarten children (18.5%) and over one in five third graders (20.4%) have untreated dental decay.
Most oral diseases are preventable. Although preventive practices have had remarkable success, the demand for care is great and increases annually. Early intervention remains elusive for many children.

Children and their parents or caregivers visit medical providers about six times in the first year of life, yet they rarely visit dental professionals during this period. Therefore, it is critical that non-dental health providers recognize dental disease and its risk factors, and engage in counseling and guidance for parents and caregivers.

The journal, Pediatrics, Vol. III No.5, May 2003 presented a Policy Statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics. An excerpt of that statement was, “Because pediatricians and other pediatric health care professionals are far more likely to encounter new mothers and infants than are dentists, it is essential that they be aware of the infectious pathophysiology and associated risk factors of early childhood dental caries to make appropriate decisions regarding timely and effective intervention. Dental decay can be well advanced by 3 years of age.” In addition, the policy statement included, “Every child should begin to receive oral health risk assessments by 6 months of age by a qualified pediatrician or a qualified pediatric health care professional.”

This Early Childhood Caries Prevention and Intervention Program was designed to provide information to non-dental health providers, including but not limited to family and general practice physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants, nurses, nutritionists, and others working with young children and their primary caregivers. The expected outcome is for the implementation of early childhood caries prevention and intervention, and a resulting decrease in dental disease.

**Using this Program**

The Education Committee of the Maine Dental Access Coalition developed this program entitled Maine Smiles Matter - An Early Childhood Caries Prevention and Intervention Program for Non-Dental Providers to aid health professionals who work with young children and their families.

Utilizing a network of trainers, this curriculum and resources will be presented to health care professionals in order to:

- Educate, build awareness and integrate oral health into existing health systems
- Enable non-dental providers to better recognize and understand oral diseases and conditions
- Enable non-dental providers to better engage in anticipatory guidance, prevention interventions, and appropriate referral for improved oral health and oral health care access
- Make a positive impact on the overall health and well-being of targeted populations in Maine
This training curriculum is divided into seven chapters. These may be used separately or in conjunction with each other. The lessons are:

- **Lesson 1**: Prenatal Care
- **Lesson 2**: Dental Decay
- **Lesson 3**: Early Childhood Caries
- **Lesson 4**: Risk Factors for Dental Decay
- **Lesson 5**: Prevention
- **Lesson 6**: What to Do and How to Do It
- **Lesson 7**: Children with Special Health Needs

Each lesson contains the following sections:
- Overview
- Goals
- Key Terms with definitions: The first time a key term is used in the curriculum it is in *italics*.
- Oral Health Education and Intervention Strategies

Other resources included with this curriculum are a reference flipchart, a short video, sample chart stickers, and a chart risk assessment sheet.

**References**


American Dental Association, *Fluoride Facts*. 1999


For The Hygienist, *Dental Hygienist News*, By The Hygienist, Volume 10, Number 1 1997. Published Through an Educational Grant from Proctor and Gamble.


Maine Department of Human Services, Division of Community Health, Oral Health Program. The 1999 Smile Survey.


*PERIO REPORTS*, Volume 1, Number 2, Volume 14, Number 4. WWW.PerioReports.com.


**Resources**

The following are some websites that may provide additional useful information.

American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry: http://www.aapd.org

American Academy of Pediatrics: http://www.aap.org

American Dental Association: http://www.ada.org

American Dental Hygienists’ Association: http://www.adha.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: http://www.cdc.gov

Colgate: http://www.colgateprofessional.com

Health Resources and Services Administration: http://www.dhhs.gov/hrsa

National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health: http://www.ncemch.org

National Institute of Dental Research: http://www.nidr.nih.gov


Oral Health America: America’s Fund for Dental Health: http://www.oralhealthamerica.org