

Children's Health

Getting Kids To Brush Up On Proper Oral Hygiene

(NAPSA)—Though parents may have reason to smile at the recent improvements in dental care in the United States, tooth decay is still one of the most common childhood diseases, according to the American Dental Association (ADA). It is five times as common as asthma in 5-17-year-olds, according to the association. And it affects more than one-fifth of American children aged 2-4, half of those aged 6-8 and nearly 60 percent of those aged 15, according to the National Center for Health Statistics.

Here are tips from the experts at HealthSaver, an emerging discount health service, and recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and the ADA:

1. **A Good Cleaning.** Your children may think they're old enough to brush their own teeth, but until they reach the age of 6, make sure to take command and brush their teeth for them at least twice a day, using a pea-sized amount of ADA-approved toothpaste. After age 6, continue to supervise brushing to make sure they reach every tooth and brush properly. Tooth care starts with the first tooth—brush your baby's gums and emerging teeth gently after each feeding with a toothbrush designed for infants and toddlers.

2. **Visit Your Dentist.** Visit a dentist as soon as your baby's first tooth appears and no later than age 1.

3. **Drink Fluoridated Water.** Water fluoridation can prevent up to 40 percent of tooth decay. Drinking water with fluoride is still the easiest and most effective way to fight tooth decay. If you're among the 40 percent of families without optimal levels of fluoridation in your municipal tap or well



THE SECRETS OF A LIFELONG BRIGHT SMILE start with the first tooth at an early age—and habits that will improve overall health.

water, talk to your dentist about fluoridation options.

4. **Don't Forget in Between.** A toothbrush can't get into every nook and cranny so it's important to floss. You will have to floss for them; it's the only way to reach lingering food particles lurking between your child's teeth.

5. **Eat Well.** Make sure your child eats a balanced diet, stays hydrated, and seeks healthy options for between-meal snacks. Do not put your child to bed with a bottle containing anything but water, and encourage use of a cup as the first birthday approaches.

HealthSaver is joining in the fight against cavities and promoting the benefits of a healthy smile. The health care discount service offers its members discounts of 10 to 35 percent off usual and customary fees for dental care services as well as discounts on prescriptions, alternative health care treatments and vision care. More information about HealthSaver is available online at www.healthsaver.com or toll-free at 1-800-7HEALTH (1-800-743-2584).