

Data Reveals Dentists' Best Tools for Kids' Oral Health

*National Children's Dental Health
Month Puts Spotlight on Prevention*

Cavities are almost entirely preventable, and a new analysis of dental claims data shows that sealants and professional fluoride treatments are playing a huge role in helping kids fight tooth decay.

With National Children's Dental Health Month approaching in February, dentists are urging parents to help kids fight cavities. The data from this recent analysis supports what most dentists also recommend: regular visits to the dentist for cleanings and preventive care.

Analysts from the Data and Analysis Center (DAC) tracked dental benefits claims from nearly 500,000 enrollees within the Delta Dental system from 1998 to 2003. The claims covered children and adolescents six to 15 years old, who, after receiving sealants, were 78 percent less likely to need fillings. Children who also received up to five professional fluoride treatments during the five-year period were 87 percent less likely to develop cavities.

"We've known for a long time that sealants are effective, but the boost from fluoride treatment is noteworthy," said Max Anderson, a national oral health advisor for



Delta Dental Plans Association, a national network of independent not-for-profit dental service corporations specializing in providing dental benefits programs to 45 million Americans in more than 76,000 employee groups throughout the country.

Dr. Anderson added that sealants were the ninth most common dental procedure among children in 2003. That figure comes from a separate review of claims for patients in the two-to-18-year age range. It showed that 240,847 patients submitted claims for sealants in 2003 and 1.3 million patients in the age range submitted claims for fluoride treatment. The review also indicates that some 2.2 million kids received treatments such as fillings, extractions, and crowns.

"Children's Dental Health Month is a great time to remind everyone that the goal of preventive care is to try to avoid dental problems altogether," said Anderson. "The encouraging news is that the recommended course of action is simple - brush twice daily, floss once each day and visit your dentist regularly."

Northeast Delta Dental

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