



The Tooth Fairy Loosened Her Purse Strings in 2012

How much are kids getting for lost baby teeth these days? The average gift from the Tooth Fairy was \$2.42 last year, up 32 cents from \$2.10 in 2011, according to Delta Dental's The Original Tooth Fairy Poll®.¹ The most common amount left under the pillow was \$1 (51 percent).

According to the poll, the Tooth Fairy was even more generous with kids who lost their first tooth, leaving more money for the first tooth in 46 percent of homes. On average, the amount given for the first tooth was \$3.49.

"Leaving gifts from the Tooth Fairy is a great way to help make losing teeth less scary and enjoyable for kids," said Bill Hupp, Delta Dental Plans Association's smiling spokesperson. "Delta Dental encourages parents to use the Tooth Fairy as an opportunity to talk about good oral health even before a child loses the first tooth. Caring for baby teeth is important, as they help children chew and speak properly and hold space for permanent teeth."

In 2012, the Tooth Fairy visited nearly 90 percent of U.S. homes with children who lost a tooth. Delta Dental suggests the following ways parents can use conversations about the Tooth Fairy as teachable moments:

- **Introduce the Tooth Fairy early on.** Kids will start losing baby teeth around age six. Before this age, parents can teach kids about the Tooth Fairy and let them know that good oral health habits and healthy teeth make her happy. Use this as an opportunity to brush up on a child's everyday dental routine. Kids not wanting to brush and floss? Remind them the Tooth Fairy is more generous for healthy baby teeth, not teeth with cavities. This will help get kids excited about taking care of their teeth.
- **Leave a note reinforcing good habits.** A personalized note from the Tooth Fairy could be nearly as exciting for kids as

the gift itself. Parents should include tips for important oral health habits that the Tooth Fairy wants kids to practice, such as brushing twice a day, flossing once a day and visiting the dentist twice a year. And, of course, parents should give the Tooth Fairy a special name. After all, Flossie or Twinkle is a bit more exciting than just Tooth Fairy!

- **Give oral health gifts.** Although the Tooth Fairy left cash for kids in 98 percent of homes she visited, two percent of children received toys, candy, gum, or other gifts. Consider forgoing cash and providing oral health gifts instead, like a new toothbrush or fun-flavored toothpaste. For readers, there are numerous children's books about Tooth Fairy adventures in bookstores or online. The days of jamming a tiny tooth underneath a huge pillow and making the Tooth Fairy blindly grope around under a heavy sleeping head are gone. Special pillows with tiny, tooth-sized pockets attached are now available online, with themes ranging from princesses to ninjas. Some of the pillows can even be customized with your little gap-toothed child's name. Or if a parent (the Tooth Fairy) is feeling generous, kids could receive both cash and a new toothbrush.

"It's hard for young kids to fully comprehend the importance of oral health, but tapping into a child's imagination can make taking care of teeth more exciting," Hupp said.

For more information, visit www.theoriginaltoothfairypoll.com. To get a sense of the taste and style choices of the Tooth Fairy and for some fun ideas, parents can follow her on Pinterest at www.pinterest.com/origtoothfairy.

¹Morpace, Inc. conducted The Original Tooth Fairy Poll® on behalf of Delta Dental with 1,224 consumers across the United States.