

DELIVERY OF ORAL HEALTH CARE

SPECIAL GROUPS: INFANTS & PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN¹

1 Introduction

Primary teeth, also known as baby teeth or deciduous teeth, begin to form five weeks after conception and, by the time a baby is born, all 20 primary teeth are usually present but un-erupted. These teeth begin to erupt at about six to nine months of age and good dental care begins at this age. A coordinated effort from all involved in the care of the infant and pre-school child is needed to ensure that optimal oral health is achieved for them.

2 Principles

- 2.1 Children with healthy teeth can chew food comfortably, learn to speak clearly and smile with confidence.
- 2.2 Healthy primary teeth are essential in the maintenance of space for the developing permanent teeth.
- 2.3 Care of the infant and pre-school child is often a partnership between parents and carers inside and outside the home. A coordinated effort is necessary to ensure a consistent approach to the maintenance of oral health.
- 2.4 Contact between parents and carers and appropriate professionals during the prenatal and early postnatal period allows for the dissemination of information regarding the proper care of the infant.
- 2.5 Early positive experiences with dentists and appropriate allied dental personnel will encourage a lifetime of good dental habits and a positive attitude towards maintaining oral health.
- 2.6 Access to appropriate information and care is an important factor that influences the prevention of early childhood caries in our community.

3 Policy

- 3.1 Children should visit a dentist within six months of the eruption of the first tooth or by twelve months of age. Early assessment helps to prevent dental problems.
- 3.2 Dentists and appropriate allied health personnel can advise parents and carers on such basic issues as:
 - oral hygiene;
 - diet;
 - teething remedies;
 - appropriate feeding practices;

¹ This Policy Statement is linked to other Policy Statements: 1.1 "National Oral Health" and 2.3 "Allied Dental Personnel".

- prevention and management of dental trauma;
 - avoidance of disruption to normal growth patterns; and
 - basic dental first aid.
- 3.3 Only dentists should advise on fluoride supplementation.
- 3.4 The support of all professionals involved in the care of infants and pre-school children should be enlisted in the dissemination of information regarding the maintenance of oral health.
- 3.5 Maternity and early childhood nurses should have access to information regarding oral hygiene, teething remedies, appropriate feeding practices, avoidance of disruption to normal growth patterns, prevention and management of dental trauma and fluoride supplementation.
- 3.6 Day care, child-care centre and pre-school staff should be informed on all issues related to the development and maintenance of appropriate dietary and oral health guidelines for their facilities.
- 3.7 All health professionals involved in the care of infants and pre-school children should possess knowledge regarding their appropriate referral for oral care when required.

Policy Statement 1.3.8

Adopted by ADA Federal Council, April 10/11, 2008.