Tooth Decay on the Increase in 5 year old Children

Public Health England survey confirms improvement in children’s dental care but Chemist Direct reports what more can be done.

London (PRWEB UK) 25 September 2013 -- Tooth decay is caused by a build-up of plaque on the teeth. Bacteria in the plaque feed on sugars from food and drink, and produce an acid that slowly destroys teeth. More than a quarter of five-year-olds in England have tooth decay, although the number is down, a survey suggests.

The analysis by Public Health England looked at data from 133,000 dental examinations across the country, covering 21% of five-year-olds. It suggested 27% of all five-year-olds had tooth decay, down from 30% in a 2008 survey. The British Dental Association (BDA) said there remained a "deep chasm" between the best and worst areas.

A five-year-old normally has 20 milk teeth. Children with decay had, on average, between three and four affected teeth. The analysis found 3% of those with decay had one or more teeth removed, a painful procedure often carried out in hospital under anaesthetic. There have been improvements - 72% of five-year-olds have no tooth decay, up from 69% in 2008.

Public Health England suggests part of this improvement may be down to increased levels of fluoride in most children's toothpastes. The BDA's scientific adviser, Prof Damien Walmsley said: "There remain pockets of inequality. It's really about targeting resources so we can get to those people." Walmsley said trying to instil healthy eating habits as early as possible was key, as was ensuring parents regularly took their children to the dentist. 1

Decay stems largely from a poor diet, but also poor dental care - not brushing teeth properly and not visiting the dentist often enough. Although healthy adult teeth will come through in children whose milk teeth have been affected by decay, if such bad habits become ingrained, there will also be problems with those teeth. Levels of decay vary regionally with more children in northern regions with tooth decay than those in the south and eastern regions.

Levels of decay ranged from 21.2% of 5 year olds in the South East to 34.8% in the North West. Decay levels are higher in the more deprived local authorities. 2 Dr Christopher Allen, chairman of the BDA's public health committee, said: "This report highlights a welcome improvement to the overall oral health of five-year-old children across England, but it also reminds us of the deep chasm that exists between those with the best and worst oral health. That divide is based not just on geography, but also on deprivation."

Prof Kevin Fenton, director of health and well-being at Public Health England said: "This latest survey shows the numbers of five-year-olds free from tooth decay have improved but there is still much to do, as dental decay is preventable.” Brushing their teeth is an important part of your child’s daily routine, so they continue the healthy habit as they get older.

Following the recommended NHS guide for looking after children’s teeth it is advised to start to brush baby's teeth using a baby toothbrush, as soon as they begin to come through. Gradually start brushing children's teeth more thoroughly. Make sure all the tooth surfaces are cleaned, and ensure a child’s teeth are brushed twice a day; last thing at night before bed and at least one other time. Use a small-headed child’s toothbrush suitable for
child’s age.

The amount of toothpaste also depends on child’s age. For children under age three, use a smear or thin film of toothpaste that covers less than three-quarters of the brush. For children aged three to six, use no more than a pea-sized blob of toothpaste. When the child has finished brushing, encourage them to spit out the toothpaste that’s left, but not to rinse their mouth with lots of water. Don’t let the child eat or lick toothpaste from the tube. Help the child to brush their teeth or supervise them until they’re at least seven years old. Flossing children's teeth is also recommended as well as brushing.

From April this year, local authorities have taken over responsibility for oral health. Health Minister Lord Howe, said: "We know more work is needed to make sure good oral health is more consistent right across the country. However, we have some of the lowest decay rates in the world."

References

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