



2018 Delta Dental of Illinois Children's Oral Health Report

An Exam of the Oral Health of Illinois Children





Shining a Spotlight on the Oral Health of Illinois Children

Delta Dental of Illinois is the state's leading dental benefits provider, covering the smiles of 2 million individuals nationwide. We know first-hand the importance of oral health, especially for Illinois' youngest residents.

We recently commissioned the sixth annual Delta Dental of Illinois Children's Oral Health Survey, a statewide public opinion poll designed to highlight the importance of children's oral health. Working with Kelton, a leading insights firm, we surveyed 150 parents of children ages 12 and under in Illinois. This sample size yields a margin of error of ± 8 percent at a 95 percent confidence level.

We asked Illinois parents to share their opinions and their children's oral health habits. We explored serious and light-hearted topics and have summarized the results to help educate and improve the oral health of Illinois families.

Here are the key findings:

1

Illinois children's oral health isn't as good as it could be.

2

Children's dental habits, including brushing and flossing, could be improved.

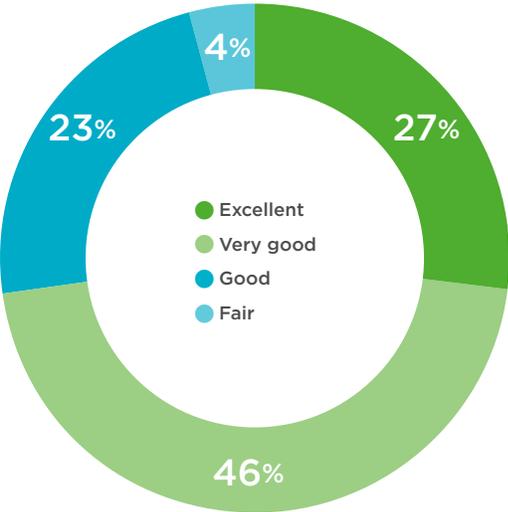
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Educational opportunities persist for both parents and children.

Kids' Oral Health Could Use Improvement

Only 27 percent of Illinois parents would rate their children's oral health as excellent. In fact, more parents say they worry about their children's oral health (34 percent) every day than their school performance (21 percent) or physical activity (21 percent).

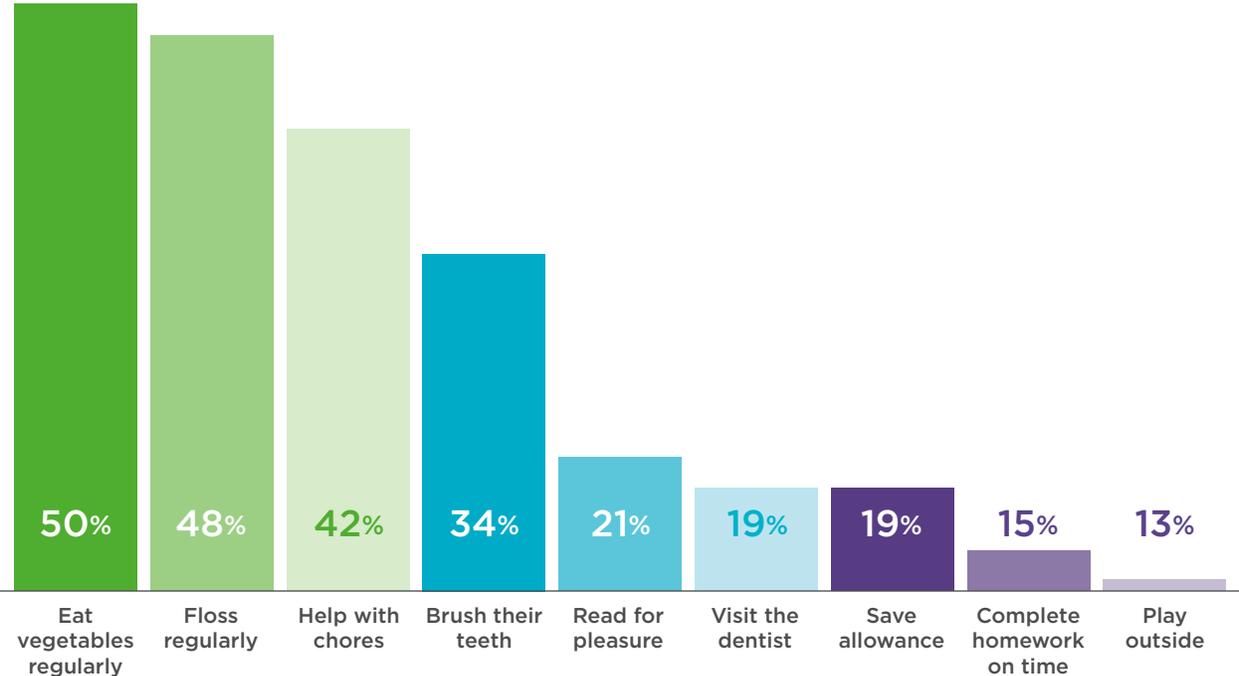
Rating for Children's Oral Health



Illinois parents say their children's oral health isn't as good as it could be because their teeth aren't brushed or flossed often enough. They also report that some of the most challenging things to get their children to do are brush (34 percent) and floss (48 percent) regularly.

Most Challenging Things to Get Children to Do

(Multiple Answers)

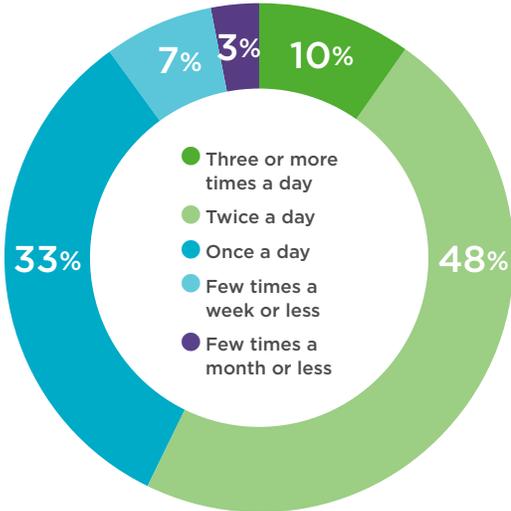


Kids Need to Brush Up on the Basics

Illinois kids' brushing and flossing habits could use some improvement. More than 4 of 10 (43 percent) parents admit their children's teeth are brushed only once a day or less often.

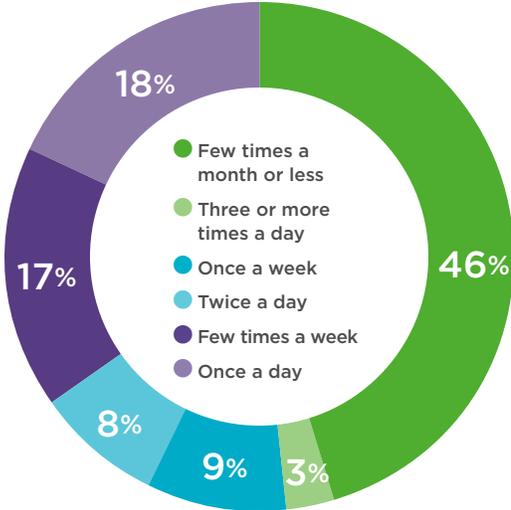
Nearly 1 of 5 (19%) parents don't replace their child's toothbrush as often as recommended - which is at least every three months.

How Often Children's Teeth are Brushed



How Often Children's Teeth Are Flossed

Nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of parents report their children's teeth are flossed less often than once a day.

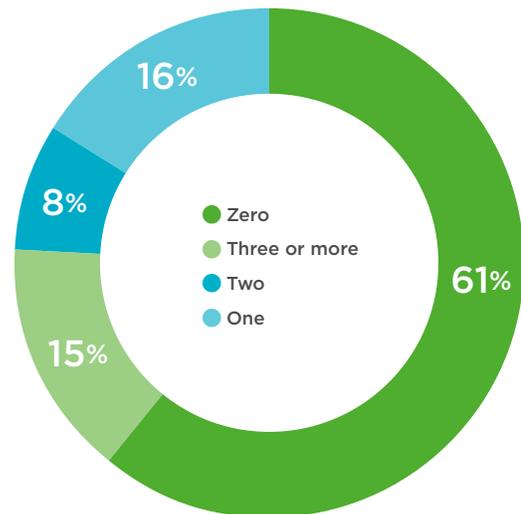


Better Habits Prevent Decay at Any Age

Tooth decay can develop any time after the first tooth comes in, starting around 6 months old. Even before a child gets the first tooth, parents should wipe the gums with a damp cloth after meals. As soon as the first tooth is in, brushing should begin.

According to our Children's Oral Health Survey, poor oral health habits for Illinois children of all ages could be contributing to tooth decay. In fact, 39 percent of children had at least one cavity in the past 12 months.

Number of Cavities in Past 12 Months



Brushing for Babies to Big Kids

1

As soon as the first tooth appears, begin brushing with a small soft-bristled toothbrush with a smear of fluoride toothpaste at least once a day, preferably before bedtime.

2

By the time children are 2, or by the time they can spit, start using a pea-sized dab of fluoride toothpaste. Be sure to train children to spit out the toothpaste and rinse afterward. Help children brush properly twice a day.

3

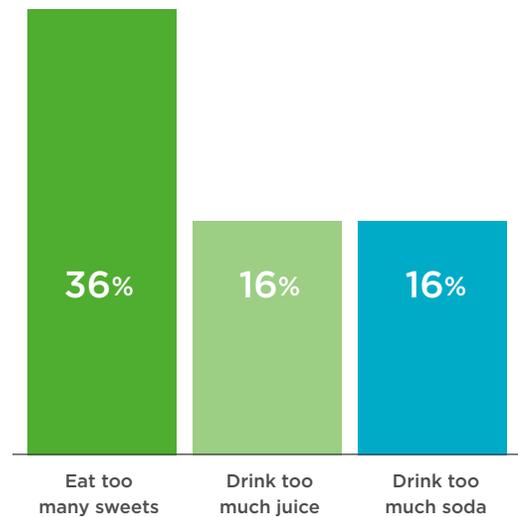
Parents should help brush and floss – or at least supervise – until age 7 or 8 or until children can properly care for teeth alone.

Everyday Habits Can Contribute to Decay

Bad brushing and flossing habits can certainly cause cavities. But parents also say there are other everyday habits that keep kids from having perfect pearly whites – like eating sweets and drinking too much juice and soda.

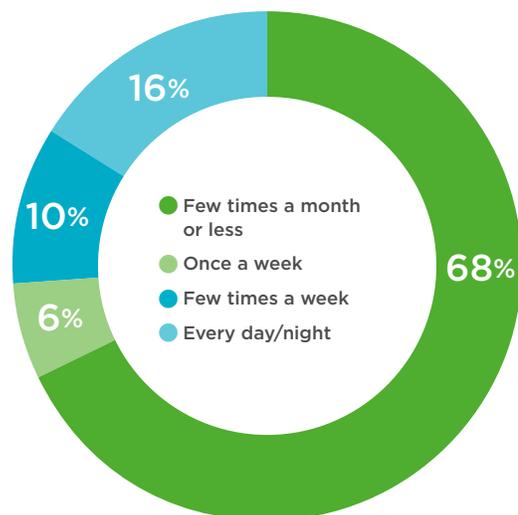
Reasons Oral Health isn't as Good as It Could Be

(Multiple responses of parents who say oral health isn't as good as it could be)



How Often Child Naps/Goes to Bed with Milk or Juice

Many parents don't realize that children shouldn't be put to bed with a bottle or sippy cup, unless it contains water. But, 33 percent of parents with children under age 3 put their child down for a nap or bedtime with a bottle or sippy cup containing milk or juice at least once a week or more.

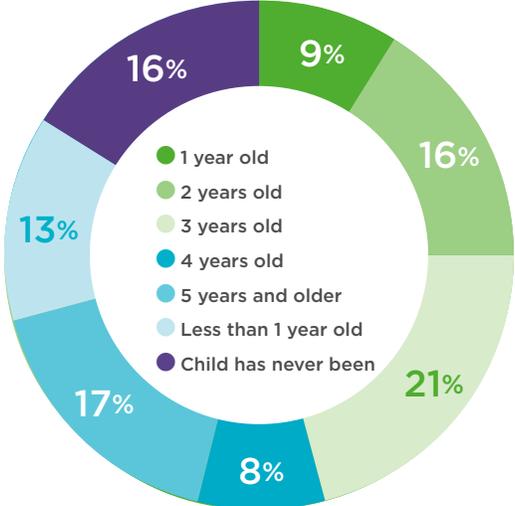


Dental Visits Should Begin at Age 1

Regular dental visits are vital to good oral health and a habit that should start no later than a child's first birthday. Yet, most Illinois children don't see their family dentist until they are 2 ½ years old or older.

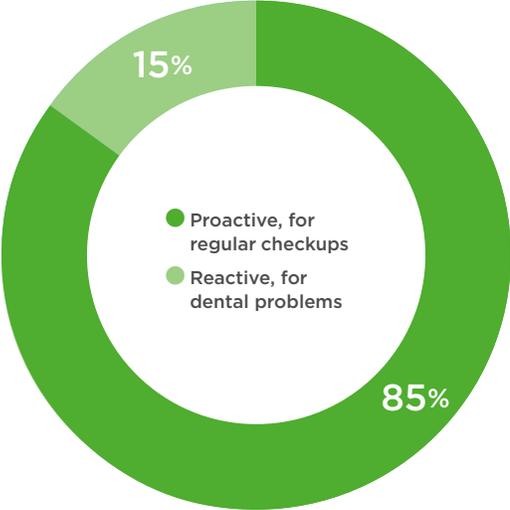
Age of Child's First Dental Visit

The good news is that of children who have seen the dentist, 96 percent visited at least once in the past year.



Dental Visits Are Important... From Age 1

Reason for Children’s Dental Visits



What to Expect at Your Child’s First Visit

At the first checkup, the dentist will:

- Assess your child’s risk for early dental decay
- Demonstrate brushing and flossing techniques
- Discuss diet and feeding practices that put your child at risk for decay
- Discuss the use of topical fluoride
- Assess your child’s bite, facial growth and development
- Provide information for trauma prevention as your child goes through stages of development

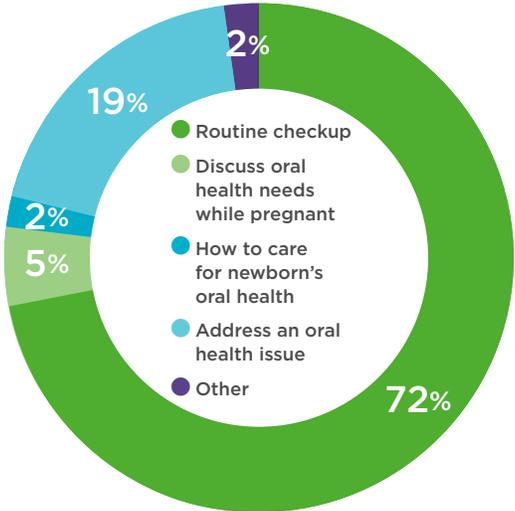
Good Dental Health Could Improve Well-Being for Mother and Baby

Oral health may not be top of mind for women when preparing for a new baby, but a visit to the dentist can help identify key health issues appearing specifically during pregnancy and provide the opportunity to ask important questions.

However, 29 percent of expecting mothers neglected to visit the dentist during pregnancy.

Reasons for Dental Visits While Pregnant

(of those who visited the dentist while pregnant)



Questions for Expecting Mothers to Address with the Dentist

Why do my gums bleed more easily?

Hormonal changes during pregnancy can exaggerate the way gum tissue reacts to plaque, increasing the risk for pregnancy gingivitis. To help, floss once daily and brush twice daily, paying close attention to cleaning along and just below the gum line.

What is the red lump that has developed along my gum line?

Pregnancy tumors are somewhat rare, red growths of gum tissue, that can form on the gums between the teeth as a result of excess plaque. These are benign and harmless, and usually subside after the baby is born.

Can I receive routine or emergency dental care during my pregnancy?

Yes, it's important to get an examination and cleaning during the first trimester so a dentist can check for any issues and assess how often visits will be necessary.



Poor Oral Health Can Affect Kids in the Classroom

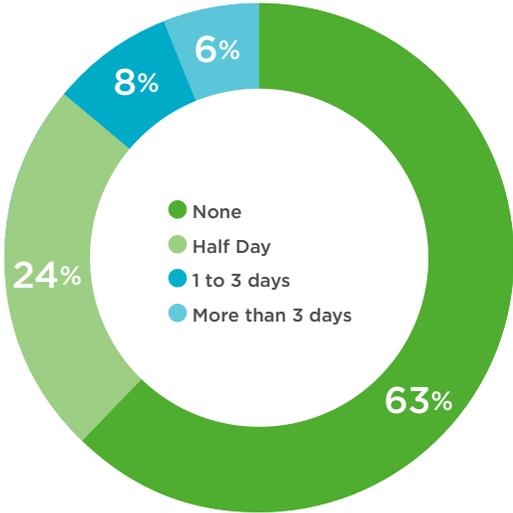
Nearly 2 in 5 (38 percent) Illinois parents say their children between the ages of 6 and 12 had to miss school due to an oral health problem in the past 12 months.

Poor oral health is a real distraction and can cause children to have a difficult time participating or concentrating in school. When a child has serious tooth decay, it can affect overall health and can lead to problems eating, speaking and learning.

Some states recognize the connection between good oral health and learning and require that children see a dentist before completing certain school grades. It's important for parents to schedule a dental visit at back-to-school time to check for any oral health problems before the school year begins.

School Days Missed Due to Oral Health Problems

(6-12 years)



Keep Smiling, Kids

When asked what kids are most proud of, 65 percent of Illinois parents say their smiles. The fact that many Illinois children are proud of their smiles is a good sign. Delta Dental of Illinois is committed to providing access to great oral health care and education, so Illinois kids can continue to feel good about their smiles.

For more resources on children's oral health, visit YourOralHealthHub.com



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