



Tooth Talk

by Mary Ellen Volansky, RDH, MS

Early Childhood Cavities Prevention

How early is "early childhood?" According to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, it's "soon after tooth eruption," which begins at age 6 months. By the time children reach kindergarten, 40 percent have decay. Among American Indian children, the rate is higher still.

The following is part of an article from *Indian Country Today* (Oct. 18, 2005):

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. – Stanley Tewa's 7-year-old toothy smile is a ragged, discolored affair complete with decayed, vacant gaps.

Indeed, his Anglo counterparts in Phoenix might giggle as they carve similar disfigurements into the grin of their Halloween pumpkin. For this Hopi boy, though, missing teeth is not a laughing matter but instead a problem that he will increasingly become aware of as he ages. More, as a member of a minority racial group – and a relatively impoverished one – Stanley is among the 25 percent of America's children who have not experienced a decline in dental caries since the early 1970s, the point at which mainstream rates began improving.

On a state level, the Oregon Early Childhood Cavities Prevention Coalition (OECPC) is a collection of health care professionals who want to prevent decay in children.

We are working together to make cavity prevention information available to everyone. We know that tooth decay is communicable and preventable. We want you to know it too.

At the Siletz Clinic, we are taking steps to stop decay in the children who come to our clinic. Parents and infants who come into the dental clinic will be working to prevent tooth decay.

Parents who have dental disease, cavities, and gum disease – and have it treated – are preventing tooth decay. Taking your 6-month-old infant to his or her well-baby check is stopping decay. Read on to learn what else you can do to prevent tooth decay.

As parents, you should get annual oral health checkups, treat active decay, get your teeth cleaned regularly, and brush and floss daily. Children are more likely to role-model what you do than what you tell them to do.

Second, you can bring your baby in for a six-month well-baby checkup. At this appointment, he or she will be seen by a dental professional for your baby's first dental care visit. He or she will be given fluoride varnish and you will receive home care instructions and supplies.

You then should schedule two more fluoride appointments and one exam with the dentist. We will follow your baby every three months until he or she is ready for a regular cleaning appointment, then we will see him or her every six months. Exams will be provided each year.

Parents who are about to have a baby can prevent tooth decay in your baby by having your teeth cared for. Mothers can have dental treatment during the second and third trimester. Fathers can begin anytime to have their oral health checked.

In addition, mothers with untreated oral infections have a greater risk of giving birth to an underweight baby and/or delivering your baby early. Untreated dental infections refers to decay and gum disease. If you are pregnant, ask your health care provider about seeing a dentist.

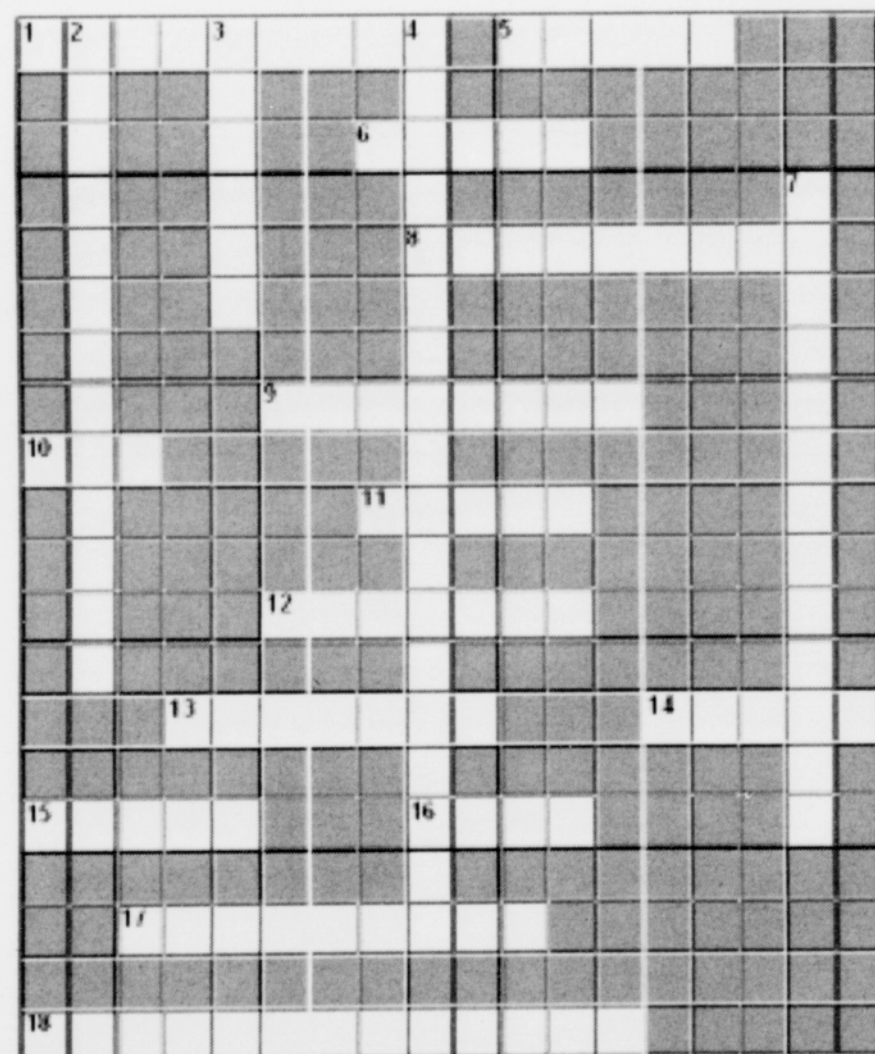
Tooth decay in young children, besides being preventable, is costly. And I don't mean just the \$5,000 to \$7,000 it costs to treat 2- to 6-year-olds in a hospital (under general anesthesia) by a pediatric dentist.

There is a cost to a child in pain and with a fever from a toothache. A child in pain or who has a fever may behave differently by becoming sluggish, tired, withdrawn, restless, irritable, and/or difficult.

Children in pain or with a fever might need to miss school, Head Start, or child care. Missed school days means missed learning. Children who do get to school can find it difficult to listen or follow directions in class or at day care.

This is a lot of information – if you have questions, you can send them to toothtalk@ctsi.nsn.us.

The finished crossword puzzle is on the dental Web page under the link Early Childhood Cavities Prevention.



Down

2. _____ Today, is a news source for tribal people.
3. What is the name of the Oregon Cavities Prevent group?
4. Where can you learn to prevent decay in Siletz?
7. Where will you find the answers to this crossword puzzle?

Clockwatchers, Inc. 2003

Siletz Community Youth BUTT In



Above: Chrissy Joe Perkins shows some of the garbage she collected.

Below: More of the trash the kids and parents picked up in Siletz.



On Aug. 15, kids and parents volunteered for the first Pickup a Butt Challenge on the streets of Siletz.

After pulling on disposable gloves and preparing their route, the youth dispersed through the streets of Siletz in search of butts and other tobacco-related garbage. They picked up more than 400 discarded cigarette butts, several chew cans, a handful of cigarette packs, and other garbage.

The Tobacco Prevention and Education Program and the Tribal Education Department co-sponsored this event after the pow-wow.

"I had just participated in a larger community cleanup with the city of Siletz and SOLV the week before," commented DeAnna Pearl, TPEP coordinator. "We picked up a lot of garbage, butts, and tobacco packaging. Then I was interested in what we would find on the following Tuesday."

"I learned cigarette butts pollute the earth," remarked Cloe Oliphant, 7.

Fact: Cigarette filters are made of cellulose acetate, **not cotton**, and are considered non-biodegradable litter. Even after a cigarette has been smoked, it still has more than 4,000 chemicals that get into our water, soil, and air. A cigarette butt, 1/3-inch long, can contain enough toxic chemicals and nicotine to poison a toddler.

"The kids did a great job," stated Alissa Lane, education specialist for the tribe. "They went everywhere and we actually had to tell them to stop after three hours of collecting!"

After the kids were done disposing of their bags and gloves, and washing their hands thoroughly, they were rewarded with pizza and prizes. They had lots of comments to share about their experiences:

- "We made our town cleaner by picking up all those butts for a more healthier world." Wyatt and Kyle Macrae
- "I picked up a lot of stuff and I feel good." Chrissy Joe Perkins
- "A lot of people smoke and I wish they didn't." Avery Perkins
- "There were a lot of butts that smelled really bad! If each butt was worth \$25, I would be a millionaire." Aden Perkins
- "If cigarette butts were a pool, we'd all drown!" Clinton Black
- "I learned smoking is a bad habit!" Clarinda Black

For more information on how to do this in your community or if you would like more information about disposing of cigarette butts safely, please call or write DeAnna Pearl, TPEP coordinator, at 541-444-9659 or 1-800-648-0449, ext. 1659, or siletztobacco@ctsi.nsn.us.