

# Health & SCIENCE

## Gearing up for Children's Dental Health Month

Eighty percent of tooth decay occurs in 20 percent of all children nationwide, according to the state Department of Health dental program.

Dental sealants, a kind of liquid plastic painted over the rough chewing surfaces of teeth, are an effective way to prevent tooth decay.

"Fluoride in water, toothpaste and mouth rinse work well to prevent tooth decay on the sides of teeth, but the tops of teeth remain vulnerable, and that leaves children at risk for cavities," said Beth Hines, dental program manager.

During February, Children's Dental Health Month, the Department encourages families to consider the merits of sealants. In an on-going effort to promote dental health, the Department provides funding for oral health activities, such as school-based sealant programs in most counties.

"Four out of five cavities occur on the molars," Hines said. "Most cavities start in the back teeth because it's easier for bacteria to hide in the pits and fissures of a tooth; even with regular brushing, it's hard to get the molars clean."

Sealants are painless, cost-effective and generally covered by dental insurance companies, she said. One filling costs, on average, \$70 compared to one sealant at \$40.

In the absence of private dental insurance, children may still benefit from sealant treatment through coverage under Medicaid. (For more information on eligibility, write to Medical Eligibility Determination Services (MEDS) at PO Box

45531, Olympia, WA 98594-5531.) Others may receive this service through sealant programs in the public school system. Many children of low income, minority and immigrant families, who remain the most risk for dental disease, rely on the public health system for dental care.

"We try to catch children as soon as their back teeth come in and seal them," Hines said.

At age 6, the first set of four molars arrive and the second set erupt at age 12 or 13. Sealant protection does not last forever. But, if done correctly, the plastic, protective coating keeps further decay from occurring in the deep hills and valleys of these teeth.

Correct application means a provider must wash the tooth with water, dry it well, then etch the tooth with solution before applying sealant.

"Sealants are safe, effective and affordable," Hines said. "Any smart and cost-conscious parent who has not heard of sealants before will want to choose this treatment for protecting their children's teeth." In celebration of National Children's Dental Health Month, the state Department of Health would like to highlight 13 health departments around the state that provide oral health programs for children, including sealant clinics.

For more information on these activities, and the phone numbers of dental societies in your area, call the Washington State Dental Association in Seattle, 206/448-1914.

## Body, Mind, and Spirit

By JOY RAMOS

Valentine's day is over and I'm still reminded of the beauty and selfish trappings of Romantic love.

Why is Romantic love so alluring?

One man regarded it as the religious ecstasy of the common person. Ariel Tomioka, author of *On the Breath of the Gods* explains, "It is really a desire to embrace life, but focused on a single person. Underneath all people's urges to find this love is the need to give of themselves and open their hearts to a more complete spiritual experience. As a first step, Romantic love shows the individual that he cannot isolate himself, he needs people. Vulnerability and passion are trademarks of Romantic love. But they are the marks of the God-seeker as well!"

Several years ago, I came across an Avon catalog featuring a necklace reproduction from the 1600's. It was delicately exquisite. The jewelry was priced at over \$300.

I learned afterwards that the necklace was given by Shah Jahan (the 5th mogul Emperor of India) as a gift to his wife, Mumtaz.

The royal couple first met at a bazaar. Mumtaz was a Persian noblewoman selling trinkets during a Muslim New Year's celebration.

The ladies of the court traditionally sold knick knacks to noblemen at exorbitant prices. They were engaging in light hearted flirtation.

Emperor Jahan was so enamored with the 19 year-old that he chose Mumtaz to be his bride. Her name was changed to mean 'Chosen One of the Palace.'

On June 17, 1641, after giving birth to their fourteenth child, she passed away. Right before her death, she requested that he build a mausoleum that would be unrivaled for its beauty anywhere in the world. He fulfilled her request.

Emperor Jahan spent twenty-two years with architects and artisans to build a spectacular marbled mausoleum in Agra, India.

The structure he built as a grand testament of love for his beloved wife has been regarded as a Wonder of the World. It is the Taj Mahal.

Unfortunately, the Emperor Jahan was imprisoned in the white dome of the mausoleum by his scheming son as a coup attempt. Emperor Jahan spent his last days there gazing across the river at the resting place of his wife.

I wanted to share this story as a hallmark example of love's way and hoped that everyone had a wonderful Valentine's day.

Happy Birthday

Tina Jackson  
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## Spanish Language Phone Bill Available From U S West

U S West is now sending new bilingual phone bills to nearly 3,000 Oregon households where Spanish is the predominant language. The new bill will go to customers who have contacted U S West's bilingual customer service center or who

have indicated that Spanish is the primary language in the home.

"We are very pleased to offer customers this kind of customized service, especially to the rapidly growing Hispanic market," said Mardy Cloyes, U S West Local Markets General

Manager for Oregon.

"Producing a bilingual bill based on the success for our El Centro customer service center is an important step in providing customers with excellent service, tailored to individual needs."

## Alcoholics, addicts treatment & information about addiction

Although it is well known that Oregon's capacity to treat people for alcohol and other drug abuse falls short of the need, Oregonians nevertheless have a number of sources of help.

Barbara Cimaglio, director of the state Office of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs (OADAP), says these are amongst them:

\* County-operated alcohol and

drug programs can be contacted by checking the phone book's blue (government) pages under County.

\* Persons eligible for the Oregon Health Plan may be able to obtain outpatient treatment for problems with alcohol and other drugs. To obtain eligibility information, call (800) 359-9517 (or TTY: 800 621-5260).

\* The Oregon Partnership operates a 24-hour informational help

line at (800) 945-HELP. Or, in the Portland area, call 244-1312.

\* Private health insurance frequently pays for treatment.

\* For other ideas, you may also call OADAP's Salem office at (503) 945-5763.

An earlier study showed for each \$1 of public money invested in treatment, society save \$5.60 in reduced medical, public assistance, crime and other costs.

## Drug-Related Emergency room Cases Decline Nationally

Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Donna F. Shalala released data late last year showing an overall six percent decline nationally in drug-related emergency room cases from 1995 to 1996 (from 517,800 to 487,600). The number of cases had steadily increased from 1990 through 1994 and remained level in 1995. "These results are another hopeful sign of progress in our efforts against

drugs. But they also signal that our work to prevent substance abuse and treat addiction is far from finished," said Shalala. The data from the Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN), an ongoing national survey of hospital emergency departments, estimates from 21 metropolitan areas, between 1994 and 1996 decreases were seen in five cities: Boston (20%—15,200 to 12,100), Denver (28%—

5,000 to 3,600), New York (10%—43,100 to 35,400), San Francisco (12%—11,800 to 10,400) and Washington DC. (20%—14,200 to 11,300). On the other hand, increases were seen in two cities during the same time period. Fourteen cities were statistically unchanged. Nationally, the most frequently recorded reason for drug-related emergency department visit was "overdose" (239,100).

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