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PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN

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DECEMBER 2010

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

HEALTHY TEETH

Healthy teeth are very important. Teeth help you chew your food, speak, and smile. If you do not take care of your teeth you can get very sick.

Types of teeth:

- **Incisors:** the front four teeth. These are used to bite and cut into food.
- **Canines:** the teeth on the sides of your front four teeth. You use them to rip and tear at tough food.
- **Bicuspids:** the two teeth behind the canines. These are used to crush food.
- **Molars:** the back teeth. You use them to crush and grind food into smaller bits so that you can swallow it.

You should see a dentist every 6 months or when:

- you have pain in your mouth or teeth
- your teeth are sensitive to heat, cold, or sweets
- you break or hurt your teeth

Cavities, gingivitis and gum disease need to be treated by you and your dentist.

Cavities

A cavity is when you have a hole in your tooth. It is also called tooth decay.

- Foods that contain sugar cause cavities. Some of these include raisins, candy, and juice.
- Germs in our mouths need sugar to live. These germs make an acid that causes cavities.
- You can get a cavity at any age.
- A cavity may not cause pain until it is large.

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You should see a dentist every 6 months or when you feel pain.

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Gingivitis

Gingivitis is a condition of the gums around the teeth.

Symptoms of gingivitis:

- Gums may look red and puffy.
- Gums may bleed and feel tender.

> ***Fact:***
> *One-fourth of U.S. adults, aged 65 and older, have lost all of their teeth.*

Cleaning your teeth and massaging your gums will help keep your gums healthy.

Some illnesses can cause gums problems. Your dentist may send you to the doctor if your gums do not get better.

Gum Disease

Gum disease is a sickness or infection of the gums and bones that hold the teeth in place.

- A dentist or dental hygienist will measure the space between your teeth and gums.
- There is a small pocket (space) between your tooth and gum at the gum line.
  - A healthy pocket is not deep.
  - A deep pocket holds germs and is harder to clean.
- Your teeth can become loose if you do not take care of gum disease.
- Gum disease may cause bad breath.

Illnesses and your teeth

Some illnesses can cause tooth and gum problems. Two of these illnesses are being obese (too heavy for your body size) or having diabetes (too much sugar in your blood).

Gum disease and obesity can increase your risk of:

- Heart attack
- Stroke
- High blood pressure
- Some kinds of cancer
- Diabetes

SOURCES:

- Herman, A.D. & Mestman, S.S. (2009). What to Do For Health Teeth. La Habra: Institute for Healthcare Advancement.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Preventing Cavities, Gum Disease, Tooth Loss, and Oral Cancers: At A Glance 2010" www.cdc.gov

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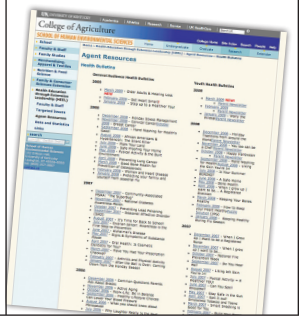

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