Fostering early dental habits helps combat childhood tooth decay

CAMP HILL, Pa. (Feb. 5, 2026) – This Children's Dental Health Month, United Concordia Dental offers parents guidance to ensure their kids develop healthy smiles and lifelong oral and overall wellness. Fostering good early dental hygiene habits is the best defense against tooth decay, the most common chronic childhood disease.

"Baby teeth are vital, not just for chewing and speech, but also as guides and placeholders for permanent teeth and overall facial development," said Katie Deffke, DDS, dental director, United Concordia Dental. "Since they're foundational in future adult oral health and well-being, parents must make their children's dental care a priority before the first tooth appears."

A 2025 C.S. Mott Children's Hospital poll found that over a third of parents reported their child experienced oral hygiene-related dental issues, such as cavities, discolored teeth and tooth pain. These problems were more common in children who practiced fewer than two oral care habits daily, a finding that underscores the importance of adult oversight in ensuring consistent day-to-day routines.

"Beyond the immediate dental discomfort, untreated tooth decay creates chronic pain and infection that can compromise a child's entire systemic health and development," said Dr. Deffke. "This not only impacts school concentration and academic performance, but also affects self-esteem, social confidence and overall healthy growth."

United Concordia Dental has developed a comprehensive children's dental timeline for parents on proper care for each stage of development. The easy-to-follow resource guides caregivers through age-specific oral care, from infancy through adolescence, outlining key milestones, daily hygiene practices and important discussions to have with a dental professional. Parents are encouraged to view the tool here.

For more on oral health, visit the Wellness Resources section at UnitedConcordia.com. Sign up to get the latest company news.

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