



For Immediate Release

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Delta Dental recommends giving the gift of oral health

ANKENY, IA, December 9, 2008 -- During the holiday season, Delta Dental of Iowa recommends stuffing your loved ones' stocking with gifts that help combat tooth decay--like a toothbrush, dental floss and sugar-free gum.

"Long-term, eating foods that are high in sugar, without proper oral care, could result in tooth decay and cavities," said Ed Schooley, DDS, Vice President and Dental Director for Delta Dental of Iowa. "Give a gift that will keep healthy teeth and gums top-of-mind during the holidays."

If not removed by brushing or other means, sugars in the mouth can contribute to tooth decay. Naturally occurring bacteria in the mouth form a colorless, sticky film called plaque. Cavity-causing organisms within plaque feed on sugar and turn it into acid, which attacks tooth enamel and leads to tooth decay.

"But proper brushing, flossing and chewing sugar-free gum are easy ways to fight tooth decay," said Schooley.

That's why Delta Dental recommends the following stocking stuffers to promote oral health this holiday season:

A toothbrush: Brushing your teeth with fluoride toothpaste is an effective strategy. Removing plaque left by holiday sweets at least twice per day, for two-minutes will help prevent tooth decay and gum disease. An alternative to the conventional toothbrush is the electric toothbrush, which some argue, is more effective at removing plaque. For children and teens, consider one of the many musical toothbrushes.

Electric toothbrushes come with vibrating, oscillating or sonic brush heads, and the basic models are relatively inexpensive. Besides brush type, you also have a choice of bristle type.

Hard bristle toothbrushes were once recommended but have been shown to be too abrasive to the teeth and gums. Give a toothbrush with a soft, rounded-end nylon bristle brush.

There are a number of toothbrushes available at drug and department stores for children and teens that play music. When the toothbrush is turned on and touches the teeth, it sends sounds through the teeth. When the music stops, after the two-minutes of recommended brushing, the user knows to stop brushing. Songs range from children's classics to pop artists.

Dental floss: While a toothbrush is effective in cleaning tooth surfaces, the bristles cannot adequately clean between the teeth. Dental floss will help remove holiday fare from these hard-to-reach areas. There are many types of dental floss to choose from--unwaxed or waxed, flavored or unflavored and regular or wide.

Waxed floss may be easier to slide through tight teeth or restoration contacts, while unwaxed floss will spread out its fibers during use for greater tooth contact. Give holiday-flavored floss--like cinnamon.

Sugar-free gum: Many studies have shown that chewing sugar-free gum after meals and snacks, especially when brushing at those times is impractical, stimulates saliva production and helps reduce the acid level in the mouth which has a potentially detrimental effect on tooth enamel. Fill stockings with gum that includes xylitol, an artificial sweetener believed to reduce the incidence of cavities.

Delta Dental of Iowa is the largest and most experienced provider of dental benefits in the state. As a not-for-profit, Delta Dental of Iowa invests in oral health projects through the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation that focus on access to care, prevention, education and research. Delta Dental of Iowa is a member of the Delta Dental Plans Association, a national organization of not-for-profit Delta Dental member companies. The national association is the largest dental benefits carrier in the nation, providing coverage to more than 51 million people in nearly 93,000 employer groups.

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