



## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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### **Brush up on Children's Oral Health in February**

ANKENY, Iowa – February 16, 2009 – Governor Chet Culver has signed a proclamation declaring February "Children's Dental Health Month." As an oral health leader in the state, Delta Dental of Iowa wants to raise the awareness of children's oral health. "It is never too early or too late to improve your child's oral health for a lifetime of good habits," said Dr. Ed Schooley, Vice President and Dental Director at Delta Dental. Below are some tips from Dr. Schooley on how parents can improve their child's oral health.

#### **Tips for Infants**

- **Visit the dentist by age 1** or within 6 months of the first tooth eruption. The purpose of this visit is to assess risk factors for dental decay including use of pacifiers and bottle-feeding, diet, basic oral hygiene and appropriate fluoride applications.
- **Do not let your child fall asleep with a bottle** that contains milk, formula or sweet fluids. This can put your baby at risk for bacteria in the mouth to convert the sugar to acid, which attacks tooth surfaces and causes decay.
- **Clean gums with a damp washcloth** prior to tooth eruption. Once your baby has his first tooth, use a soft toothbrush for cleaning.
- **Introduce fluoride toothpaste around age 2.** A "pea-sized" dab of toothpaste should be used with parent supervision and make sure your child spits out any remaining toothpaste and rinses with water after brushing.

#### **Tips for Children (ages 2-12)**

- **Limit sugar and starch exposure by reserving these foods for mealtimes** and not as a snack. The longer and more frequently these foods stay in your child's mouth, the greater the risk of decay.
- **Make sure your child receives fluoride during tooth development years (ages 2 to 6).** Check with your dentist regarding the fluoride content of your community water system to evaluate if any supplements are needed.
- **Have sealants put on six-year and twelve-year molars as soon as the teeth erupt.** These teeth are most at risk for decay because of all their grooves and pits. Sealants are a cost-effective way to prevent cavities.
- **Protect baby and permanent teeth with mouth guards.** As kids start to engage in sports like football, soccer, and basketball, a mouth guard will help shield the mouth and teeth from trauma.

For more information on children's oral health, go to [www.deltadentalia.com](http://www.deltadentalia.com).

*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 focuses on access to care, prevention, education and research. The Iowa company is a member of the Delta Dental Plans Association, a national organization of not-for-profit Delta Dental plans. 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.*