



Update

DECEMBER 2011

A legislator's guide to oral health care issues, provided by the members of the Pennsylvania Dental Association

Providing
Access to
Dental Care
in
Pennsylvania

PDA PROVIDES RESOURCES FOR Children's Oral Health

Children's success in life derives largely from exposure to healthy lifestyle habits. They thrive academically, socially and spiritually when they are taught proper nutrition, hygiene and exercise regimens. That's why the members of the Pennsylvania Dental Association (PDA) volunteer their time and resources to making sure children are taught good oral hygiene habits and that they receive the dental care they need. With a healthy smile and a mouth void of disease, children are able to better focus on their studies and they have the confidence to engage socially with their peers.

It goes without saying that oral health is an integral part of everyone's overall health. The mouth acts as the "gateway" to the body; oral health problems contribute to other chronic diseases such as heart disease, and infection that can even lead to death. Children deserve a good start in life and developing oral hygiene habits will help set them on the right course.

PDA has many resources available for parents and children. And, in many ways the dentists and dental staff who live in your communities are the resources themselves. We hope your constituents will take advantage of these resources to improve their children's oral health.

Share these websites with your constituents and encourage them to promote oral health to children, any day of the year!

www.padental.org/kidscorner

www.ada.org/353.aspx

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National Children’s Dental Health Month: The month of February is dedicated to bring public attention to the importance of oral health. There is a wealth of educational material available to assist adults who are in a position to influence children and their behavior: parents, teachers, daycare providers, Head Start administrators, health care providers, to name just a few. These resources, which are all on PDA’s website, serve as a guide for classroom learning and provide for activities for children to do on their own.



Give Kids a Smile (GKAS) programs: Ten years ago, the American Dental Association (ADA) recruited members to participate in a GKAS program. While coinciding with NCDHM and the educational outreach to children, GKAS programs are aimed at providing direct access to dental care to children in need. Dentists and other members of the dental team donate time and money to treating children, free of charge, in their dental offices and in clinics. The ultimate goal of GKAS is to establish a “dental home” for children who do not visit a dentist regularly. Many dentists will make referrals to specialists or schedule follow-up appointments for further treatment, with the hope that parents keep these appointments for their children to provide continuity of care and the “dental home” that is essential to maintaining good oral health.

Kids Corner: Children can engage in fun online activities on PDA’s website that teach about proper hygiene and the importance of a healthy mouth. These activities range from interactive games, learning fun facts about oral health and good foods to eat to providing techniques for brushing and flossing.

Virtual Dental Van: Also on PDA’s website, our Access to Oral Health Committee created a virtual educational resource for patients to find out more about oral health topics and how to access dental



Who We Are

The Pennsylvania Dental Association (PDA), comprised of more than 5,200 actively practicing and retired dentists, is proud of its efforts to improve Pennsylvanians’ oral health.

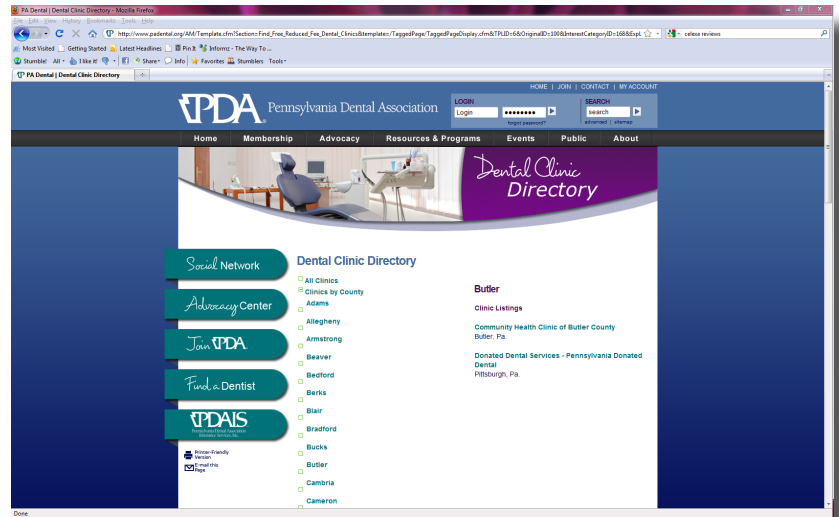
PDA’s goals are to promote optimal dental care for the public, improve the availability of dental care for all citizens, speak on behalf of the public’s dental health interests before government entities and educate the public about preventing oral disease and promoting good oral health.

This edition of the **Oral Health Update** is about PDA’s efforts to improve the oral health of our most vulnerable citizens: our children. There are many valuable resources available for your constituents, most especially parents and children, and we hope that you will share this information with them. Please consider PDA members a resource, not only on health-related legislative issues, but as the experts to help improve oral health literacy and access to dental care in your communities.

care in their communities. It also clearly explains how to navigate the state's Medical Assistance (MA) and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) programs, how to find participating dentists and what to expect from a dental office visit. There also are tips for safeguarding children's oral health and links to other resources.

Patient Resource Center: Another online resource is PDA's Patient Resource Center, which answers frequently asked questions about oral health. Video presentations accompany some answers to provide better instruction for practicing good oral hygiene habits and to help teach parents about caring for their children's teeth and gums.

Dental Clinic Directory: Sometimes it is difficult to find a dental provider, especially in rural areas of Pennsylvania. PDA offers an online directory of dental clinics, listed by county, with a complete explanation of the services each clinic offers, whether the clinic requires some payment or will provide free services, hours of operation and contact information. These clinics are open to children and adults.



Promote Healthy Beverages and Snacks in Schools:

PDA supports initiatives that promote healthy snacks and beverages in schools, and has a policy against schools signing exclusive pouring rights contracts with soda beverage companies. Members strive to educate school children and their parents and are available to discuss how schools can offer healthy food choices at PTA meetings and other school-related events.

PDA Participates in the City of Harrisburg's Trick-or-Treat Night. We were excited to be a part of making the Pennsylvania First Lady's Trick-or-Treat Night a success by donating hygiene kits to the 50 children in attendance. These kits contained toothpaste, a toothbrush and floss, a must-have for any child eating Halloween candy. PDA also donated educational material made especially for children, providing a fun way for them to learn about dental health. We encourage you to host similar events in your communities—contact PDA, other dental organizations and dental suppliers for donations to help children in your area!



Other Helpful Websites:

Get Mouth Power: Provides great tips for keeping a healthy smile, no matter your age.
www.getmouthpower.org

The National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center: Provides tips for expectant mothers and for starting children on the right path to maintaining good oral health.
www.mchoralhealth.org

The Food Trust: Provides valuable tools for eating healthy and proper nutrition for growing children.
www.thefoodtrust.org

Center for Science in the Public Interest: Provides a wealth of information about the health risks of consuming too much soda and its link to other diseases.

Centers for Disease Control
www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/topics/child.htm



Contact Us

PDA prides itself on being Pennsylvania's premier dental organization and the leading authority on all dental issues. Please contact our government relations staff at mss@padental.org, or (717) 234-5941, for more information about our advocacy goals. You also can contact PDA's government relations consultants, Mark Singel and Peg Callahan of The Winter Group, at (717) 909-9561.

Visit www.padental.org to find out more about us and the services our members provide to your constituents! Find us on Twitter @padentalassn and on Facebook www.facebook.com/padentalassn.

