

Healthy Teeth Happy Babies

Infant and Prenatal Oral Health Public Education Campaign

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GBSM, Inc.
Denver, Colorado



Background

- The Delta Dental of Colorado Foundation's mission is to **eradicate tooth decay in Colorado's Children.**
- The issue
 - Tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease in the U.S., five times more common than asthma
 - In Colorado, about 7.8 million school hours are lost every year due to oral pain
 - 52% of elementary school kids have either a filling or untreated decay
 - 19% of preschool children (ages 2-5) have at least 1 tooth with untreated decay
 - Tooth decay is nearly 100% preventable
- Parents recognize the importance of good oral health and preventive care for themselves, but not their young children, especially infants



Research

- In 2006, the Foundation commissioned an in-depth study by an independent third party research firm to get a baseline understanding of perceptions about the importance of good oral health for infants and pregnant mothers and how to raise awareness about these issues
- 328 phone surveys were completed with mothers of children birth to 2 years old in the seven-county Denver metro area
 - The maximum margin of sampling error was +/- 5.4 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence
 - The response rate was 41%, well above average for phone surveys
- This comprehensive study looked at awareness, behaviors, and practices including:
 - At what age do mothers take their children to the dentist? Why?
 - How much do mothers of young children know about infant oral health? Where do they learn this information? From medical providers? The Web? Other sources?
 - Do at-home behaviors change as they learn more?
 - Dental habits and more...



2006 Key Findings

Awareness of Key facts related to children's oral health

Dental disease in children is nearly 100% preventable.	70%
Tooth decay can affect a child's overall physical health as well as oral health.	67%
Tooth decay as an infant can lead to tooth infections later.	60%
Tooth decay can be passed from parent to infant by sharing a spoon with a child.	26%
By 2-3 years of age, two-out-of-ten have a tooth with untreated dental cavities.	20%
When baby's teeth come in, dentists can tell if the child is at risk for tooth decay.	20%
Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease among children in the US.	16%



2006 Key Findings

Latinas were significantly more likely to say each of these facts would make them think about the importance of taking their child to the dentist at an early age.

	Caucasian	Latina	Δ
Dental disease in children is nearly 100% preventable.	71%	85%	14
Tooth decay can affect a child's overall physical health as well as oral health.	67%	79%	12
Tooth decay as an infant can lead to tooth infections later.	66%	83%	17
Tooth decay can be passed from parent to infant by sharing a spoon with a child.	50%	71%	21
By 2-3 years of age, two-out-of-ten have a tooth with untreated dental cavities.	68%	77%	9
When baby's teeth come in, dentists can tell if the child is at risk for tooth decay.	68%	85%	17
Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease among children in the US.	60%	75%	15



Key Findings

- Pregnant women and new moms are particularly open to learning more about the importance of their oral health and their infants'
- The most influential determinant to recognizing the importance of infant oral health is the advice of the medical professional
- Few mothers know that medical guidance recommends dental visits by age one
- Few dentists and doctors recommend visits by age one, despite professional guidelines to the contrary



The Plan

- Goals: Raise awareness of the issue and of key facts (vertical bacteria transmission), and motivate positive behavior changes
- Desired behavior changes:
 - Stop sharing utensils
 - See a dentist, both mother and child
 - Stop putting sweet liquids in bottles and sippy cups
- Key Messages
 - Tooth decay is nearly 100% preventable and you have the power to prevent cavities
 - Infant oral health starts with pregnancy
 - Cavities can be passed from mother to child

Strategy

- Develop a community-based social marketing (CBSM) approach
 - Frame the issue based on audience research
 - Raise awareness through a combination of targeted traditional marketing and grassroots efforts
 - Engage the provider community across disciplines including obstetrics, pediatrics, dentistry, community service providers and child care centers
 - Reinforce messaging publicly and in provider offices for sustained behavior change

The Campaign

- Mainstream media advertising including radio, television, print and geo-targeted transit ads
- Earned media in print and online social media and mommy blogs
- Escalating emphasis over time on high-risk (Hispanic and low-income) population
- Distribute info through clinical journals, professional association publications, conferences, direct mail, e-newsletters, and more
- Develop free, bilingual patient education materials that are simple to read and culturally relevant

The Campaign (cont'd)

- Offer free materials to all providers who engage with new and expecting parents, including:

OBGYN	Hospitals	Family Practice
Pediatricians	General Dentists	Hygienists
Pediatric dentists	Community Clinics	Community Centers

(over 600 providers statewide have requested nearly 450,000 patient education materials over four years)
- Annual survey to track progress
- In the last two years, Delta Dental of Colorado's (DDCO) claims analyst has examined insurance claims to identify trends
- Recently completed fourth year of campaign



Results

- Awareness that cavity-causing germs can be passed from mother to infant has increased from 26% to 79%
- Of those who heard the message, more than half changed their behavior

91% stopped sharing items	86% brushed or flossed
79% stopped cleaning pacifier with their own mouth	77% stopped putting sweet liquids in the bottle
- Latina respondents and those with high-school or less education are much more likely to change behavior as a result of hearing campaign message
- Even after hearing the messages, behaviors less likely to change are mothers taking their child to the dentist and seeing a dentist themselves
- *A community-based social marketing effort can be effective in combating dental disease and encouraging healthier dental habits*

Results (cont'd)

- Statistically significant increase in percentage of DDCO claims from infants between one and three years of age accessing dental care
 - Higher than the percentage growth of DDCO subscribers
 - Higher than comparison populations in Portland and Virginia
- Steady increase in DDCO preventive and diagnostic dental services, with a steady and significant decline in operative or restorative dental treatment
- Are we seeing long-term dental benefits as a result of early interventions? Is this because of this campaign or other factors?

Challenges

- New and expecting mothers are a population that is continually renewing
- Advertising is a key component of raising awareness, but is the most costly component of a campaign
- High-risk populations with low-incomes are less likely to see a dentist for economic reasons
- Within the provider community, general dentists are least receptive to change and often do not want to see children under age three
- Medical providers are constantly under pressure to get a lot of educational information into visits, and oral health information can be low on their priority list

Next Phase

Still under development, but elements under discussion are:

- Continue the strategy and tactics that have been successful over the past four years
- Increased direct outreach to dental providers
 - Increase awareness and acceptance of AAP and AAPD guidelines for the age one dental visit
 - More peer-to-peer communication
 - Develop more dental expert content for use in clinical articles, newsletter placements, and online posts
- Increase advertising spend from 2010

Questions?