

# Children's Oral Health

Alabama Department of Public Health

*“What amounts to a silent epidemic of dental and oral diseases is affecting some population groups. This burden of disease restricts activities in schools, work, and home and often significantly diminishes the quality of life.” Former Surgeon General David Satcher.*

Did you know that a child's oral health status has been determined to be closely related to a child's ability to learn. A child who is trying to concentrate on school work and has problems with their teeth can cause their ability to focus and concentrate to be severely compromised. Also early tooth loss caused by dental decay can result in failure to thrive, problems with speech development, absenteeism and inability to concentrate in school along with reduced self esteem.

Students with dental problems that are untreated may have difficulty learning

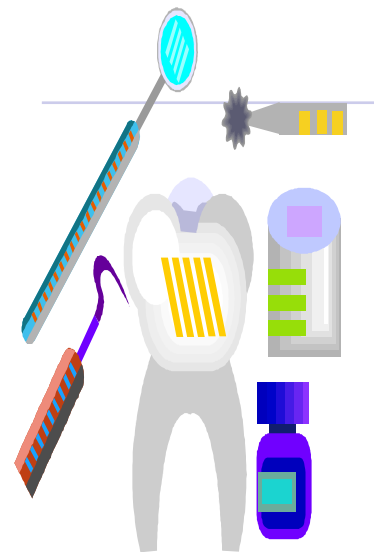
and concentrating and could affect their ability to grow and also learn. Poor oral health has also been associated with decreased school performance, poor social interactions with others due to decreased self esteem which could also influence their success later in life.

Children are most often unable to verbalize their feelings or afraid to tell someone that they are in pain. The teacher may be the first person to recognize this which could be portrayed by a child who may be having difficulty finishing work or who may

display the effects of pain, depression, and the child may withdraw from activities with other children.

Children who are missing teeth have to limit their food choices and may result in diets that are deficient in important nutrients.

Diets deficient in necessary nutrients during childhood could have detrimental effects on a child's cognitive development, affect child's ability to concentrate, behavior and affect the outcome of later life as an adult.



## Steps to Improve Children's Oral Health

\*Make sure your child receives routine dental exams.

\*Encourage your child to eat healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables .

\*Supervise your child with their brushing technique and also teach them to use dental floss.

\*Ask your dentist about fluoride supplements.

\*Ask your dentist about dental sealants.

\*Consult your dental provider with any questions or concerns.

Reference: National Maternal and Child Oral Health Center, Washington, DC. [www.mchoralhealth.org](http://www.mchoralhealth.org)

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