

Many children and adults lack access to dental care, which is a critical component in achieving good oral health. A child in pain because of tooth decay often cannot concentrate well in school, may have significant absences and become withdrawn; pain from dental disease can also affect a child's eating habits and nutrition.

For this reason, the American Dental Association founded Give Kids a Smile in 2003 to raise public awareness of what the U.S. Surgeon General called "a silent epidemic" of dental disease, and to encourage, parents, politicians and others who care about children to address this issue in their communities.

Members of the Ohio Dental Association respond to this need through Give Kids a Smile and other access to care programs.

## Biting Facts

- Dental care is the **number one unmet need of Ohio children and low-income adults**. (Ohio Department of Health report, Oral Health Isn't Optional, 2011)
- **Twenty-six percent of Ohio third graders from low income families have untreated cavities** and 17 percent say they have toothaches. In Ohio's Appalachian counties, 27 percent of the third graders have untreated cavities. (ODH report, Oral Health Isn't Optional, 2011)
- **More than 51 million school hours are lost each year** to dental-related illness. (Oral Health in America: A Report of the U.S. Surgeon General, 2003)
- For children, untreated cavities **can cause pain, dysfunction, school absences, difficulty concentrating and poor appearance** — problems that greatly affect a child's quality of life and ability to succeed. (Preventing Cavities, Gum Disease, Tooth Loss and Oral Cancers, Centers for Disease Control, 2011)
- **Tooth decay affects more than one-fourth of U.S. children aged 2-5 years** and half of those aged 12-15 years. (Preventing Cavities ... CDC, 2011)
- Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease among children, **occurring at five times the rate of asthma and seven times that of hay fever**. (Oral Health in America: A Report of the U.S. Surgeon General, 2003)
- More than 16 million children have tooth decay and unlike a cold, **tooth decay does not go away**; it only gets worse. (American Dental Association)
- **Nearly one in four children aged two to 11 years old have untreated cavities** in their baby teeth, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Many children enrolled in Medicaid receive no dental services throughout the year. (American Dental Association)



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