

The Tooth Fairy Times



Public Health Information from The Dental Health Program | Division of Maternal and Child Health | Prince George's County Health Department

Tooth Fairy Hospitalized for Exhaustion

Parents Help Needed.

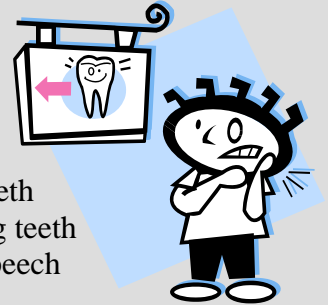
The Tooth Fairy needs the help of all parents, guardians and teachers. She has been working overtime because of the increase in lost children's teeth due to the "silent epidemic" of Early Childhood Caries (ECC). ECC is a bacterial infection caused by *Strep. mutans* which spreads through saliva from one person to another. It is a really bad cavity germ that changes sugary and starchy foods and drinks into powerful acids that soften teeth until they decay. The bacteria can spread through the sharing of family saliva.

Death of MD Boy from ECC in 2007

A 12-year old Maryland boy tragically died of a brain abscess complication from untreated tooth decay in February 2007. Don't let this happen to your child. Brush and floss your child's teeth twice a day and make sure they receive dental checkups every 6 months after they reach 1 year of age. **ECC is preventable!**

In Children, ECC Dental Infection Can Cause:

- early loss of baby teeth
- crowding and damage to permanent teeth
- poor chewing due to broken or missing teeth
- poor growth, poor self-esteem, poor speech
- lost school and parent work days
- **pain, swelling and infection that spreads to major organs, causing serious sickness and sometimes even death.**



MD School Children Have Three Times the National Average of Tooth Decay

The fact is, Maryland children need better dental care. **One in five children attend school each day with dental pain.** This can affect overall school performance, growth, speech development and self-esteem.

We owe it to them to practice and teach prevention, as well as keep them from the damaging practices of consuming too many "party foods" such as candy, cookies, cake, punch, soda and starchy foods like pretzels and crackers. We should all **encourage children to eat healthier meals to help their growing bodies, including milk, yogurt, cheese, fruits, vegetables, meats, nuts, seeds, beans, eggs, cereal, pasta and grains.**

Save the Tooth Fairy Tips to Prevent ECC

1. **Keep the germ from entering a child's mouth.** Do not kiss lips, share drinks, blow on or taste each other's foods, "clean" off a baby's pacifier in the mouth, or share toothbrushes.
2. **Keep children from slowly sipping sugary drinks and munching snacks.** Limit fruit juice to once/day; offer milk at meals/water between meals; stay away from sodas, diet soft drinks, punch, powdered drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks which are not healthy choices; save candy, cookies, chips and crackers for special occasions only.
3. **Brush and floss children's teeth twice a day after meals and don't miss dental check ups every 6 months** starting with the first birthday.
4. **Be a role model for good dental health.** Children watch what you do. Eat healthy and drink water instead of other drinks.