Allegheny County Health Department Pediatric Dental Program

Allegheny County Health Department (PACDC) of the Pittsburgh Region has a specialty practice in the Dental Public Health field. The PACDC's Division of Dental Public Health is the specialty of dentistry that promotes oral health as well as the prevention and control of dental diseases. Public health dentists provide oral health promotion and disease prevention services that address oral health issues. At the School of Dental Medicine, the Department of Dental Public Health has three objectives: providing quality education, conducting scholarly research, and acting as a resource service and in public health dentistry. For more information, visit www.dental.pitt.edu/health.php.

Division of Pediatric Dentistry

The Division of Pediatric Dentistry at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC provides care to pediatric patients in the Pittsburgh region, including the counties of Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Cambria, Clarion,长老, Washington, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, and Washington. Pediatric Dentists (MDs) provide conservative and comprehensive care to children. Pediatric Dentists are also available in some of the County’s Pediatric Outpatient offices. Call 412-602-5440 for appointments.

“Under the past half-century, we have come to recognize that the mouth is a mirror of the body, it is a sentinel of disease, and it is a key to overall health and well-being.”

—DAVID SATCHER, MD, PhD
Former U.S. Surgeon General

What is oral health? Why is it so important? Oral health is vital to everyone’s total health, but it’s also much more. It involves healthy gums and teeth free from pain, diseases or defects. It means being able to eat, speak and show emotions. Problems in other parts of the body can often be discovered in and can be associated with the mouth. For instance, infections and diseases and some cancers can be detected in saliva and in other oral examinations.

While oral health has gotten a lot more attention in the past few decades, there are still significant health disparities. One of the most basic ways to protect our oral and overall health is to prevent tooth decay. Mouths are full of bacteria. When the food or drink we consume comes in contact with some of those bacteria, a type of acid is formed. This acid breaks down our teeth and causes cavities—permanent damage to the tooth that must be fixed by a dentist. If left undetected, they can lead to tooth loss and lead to problems chewing or problems in our gums and bones in the mouth.

The first step in our overall health begins in childhood. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, tooth decay affects 25 percent of children ages 2 to 5 years old. In addition, children with caries—permanent damage to the tooth that must be fixed by a dentist. If left undetected, they can lead to tooth loss and lead to problems chewing or problems in our gums and bones in the mouth.

“Bacteria may spread to the tooth’s nerve or pulp after decayed teeth are repaired. This can spread to the body and travel to the bloodstream.”

As you mentioned, we can take for granted the importance of getting routine dental cleanings and exams. Higher-risk patients, like people with a history of dental disease, tobacco use and excessive alcohol intake, should be seen by a dentist regularly. Also, women, especially when pregnant, have special dental needs that need to be monitored and addressed by a dental professional. It’s good to know that there are valuable dental resources available in the Pittsburgh community. The Pittsburgh Dental Health Department’s pediatric dental program provides preventive and corrective treatment for children ages 1 to 20. The range of services includes examinations, cleanings, fluoride treatment and sealants, and preventative care. The program provides care for those children who are most in need. These services are available to children who are covered by insurance or who need financial assistance. For more information, visit www.acdh.edu/services/index.php.

Dental Public Health

Dental Public Health is the specialty of dentistry that promotes oral health as well as the prevention and control of dental diseases. Public health dentists can promote oral health by assessing the oral health needs of the community, developing and implementing oral health programs, and providing programs and services that address oral health issues. At the School of Dental Medicine, the Department of Dental Public Health has three objectives: providing quality education, conducting scholarly research, and acting as a resource service and in public health dentistry. For more information, visit www.dental.pitt.edu/health.php.

MedlinePlus Dental Health Information

MedlinePlus is produced by the National Library of Medicine (part of the National Institutes of Health). The Web site provides free, reliable and up-to-date health information in easy-to-understand language. The Web site also provides links to videos, tutorials, games, health statistics and clinical trials. See the links below for information about dental health.

Adult information: www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/dental.html

Dental Health Resources

ESTHER BUSH

Oral Health

These monthly pages focus on health disparities in the Pittsburgh region. They educate the reader about key health issues and inform them about research opportunities and community resources. All articles can be found online at the New Pitts- burg Courier Web site. The monthly pages are a partnership of the New Pittsburgh Courier, Community PART- ners (the core service of the University of Pittsburgh’s Clinical and Transla- tional Science Institute—CTSI), the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh Center for Engage- mental Science Institute—CTSI.

This month, the “Take Charge of Your Health Today” page focuses on oral health and the range of re- sources available in Allegheny County, including the Division of Pediatric Dentistry at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC. Community PART- ners, and other Pittsburgh resources.

“Good morning, Ms. Bush. It’s a privilege to get this opportunity to talk with you about one of my favorite top- ics in public health—oral health. As topics were chosen for each month’s health segment, you thought it was im- portant to highlight oral health in February, The American Dental Association (ADA) sponsors your month as National Children’s Dental Health Month. Hav- ing a whole month dedicated to dental health helps increase awareness of oral health and why this is an important issue for the African American commun- ity and its youth.

Dr. Rubin suggests avoiding soft-drinks and sugary snacks, as well as chewing tobacco. Problems with teeth and gums can cause children to not want to eat properly, become embarrassed about their appearance, to miss days of school or even be hospitalized. If tooth decay or cavities go untreated in child- hood, they can lead to gum disease in adult- hood. Gum disease begins when bacteria get

Health is key to overall health: gums and teeth vital to health.

A dentist and his assistant attend to a patient. (AP Photo/M. Spencer Green, file)