

Pointers For Parents

First Step To A Healthy Smile

(NAPSA)—According to the U.S. Surgeon General's report on oral health, tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease. An often overlooked aspect of children's health, oral health problems continue to be a problem, with almost 20 percent of children ages 2-3 having at least one untreated cavity and more than 50 percent of children developing some form of gingivitis. These and other children's dental issues result in a loss of 51 million school hours each year.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Oral-B and television personality and author Joan Lunden have joined together to raise awareness of the importance of children's oral health and to remind parents to teach healthy oral care habits.

Joan Lunden, a mother of seven children (including two sets of twins under 4 years old), has made creating a dental routine a priority for her kids. "Our children depend on us to help them form the good habits that will guide them into a healthy adulthood," says Lunden. "There is so much that we can do to help our children get off to the right start so that they can have a lifetime of good dental health. Choosing the right oral care products that are designed especially for kids, such as Oral-B Stages, is an important first step to a healthy smile."

Since pediatricians are a primary



Children need different kinds of toothbrushes at different ages.

resource for parents on children's health issues, AAP advises parents to speak with their pediatrician about their child's oral health early and often. Parents can take the first step in their children's oral health by doing the following:

- **Begin oral care routine early**—To prevent the buildup of plaque, parents should begin by regularly cleaning their newborn baby's gums with a damp washcloth following feedings. When the first tooth appears, parents should brush their child's teeth for two minutes twice a day to begin the recommended regimen. Not only is this important to help prevent decay, but it also helps acclimate kids to the recommended brushing time.

- **Selecting the right tools**—Use a toothbrush with extra-soft bristles and nonfluoride toothpaste until age 2, when it's safe to switch to toothpaste with fluoride. Choose products that are designed to meet

children's needs at different ages, such as dentition (formation of their teeth and jaw), dexterity (ability to handle a toothbrush) and development (emotional changes and interest).

- **Visit the dentist regularly**—A child's dental visit should begin by 12 months of age with additional visits determined by the dentist to ensure proper oral development. Parents should discuss the best methods to care for their child's oral health with the pediatrician even before the first dental visit.

- **Take first steps to healthy eating**—Proper nutrition is important to your child's oral health. Foods high in sugars and starches help decay-causing bacteria make acid that destroys teeth. Choose nutritious snacks that build strong teeth and resist decay and gum disease, such as veggies, fruit, yogurt, cheese and milk.

- **Make brushing fun**—Brush your teeth together to set a good example. Choose toothbrushes and toothpaste with popular kids' characters. Sing a two-minute song to your child to encourage brushing for the dentist-recommended time. Making the brushing routine fun will encourage proper habits early and help prevent oral care issues later in life.

To learn more about these and other tips, you can visit the Web site www.oralb.com/stages for more information.