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Common Parenting Practice Could Endanger Kids' Teeth *Parents should monitor use of bedtime bottles*

Glendale, AZ (February 1, 2008) -- Anyone who has experienced parenthood knows how a well-timed sippy cup of juice can save the day – or night. But the same things that soothe and comfort might also bring about oral health problems later in life.

A significant concern to dentists is the practice of giving children juice or milk in a bottle or sippy cup to sip on throughout the day or at bedtime. Prolonged exposure to the sugars found in milk and juice contribute to tooth decay and a condition known as baby bottle tooth decay, a painful and damaging consequence for young children to endure.

February is National Children's Oral Health Month

This is a great time to remind parents what they can do to prevent cavities. "Some people think it's not a big deal for a young child to get a cavity or lose a baby tooth since these primary teeth eventually fall out anyway," said Jerry Denning, DDS, dental consultant for Delta Dental of Arizona. "However, maintaining healthy baby teeth is extremely important for the long-term health of permanent teeth. When baby teeth are damaged by decay, it can affect nutrition, speech development and self-esteem, and can cause problems with spacing as permanent teeth grow in."

According to Arizona's Office of Oral Health, tooth decay is the most common childhood disorder affecting Arizona children, with **34%** having some form of tooth decay by the age of **three**. Recent research demonstrates this burden is distributed unevenly, affecting more Arizona children from low-income families, children without dental insurance and children of important cultural groups such as Native Americans and Hispanics.

First Dental Visit by Age One

In order to combat and prevent dental decay, RaNee Toscano, R.D. H., and Acting Chief of the Arizona State Department of Health Services - Office of Oral Health stresses the importance of parents starting early, "Seeing a dentist by age one or when your child's first



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tooth erupts is critical to their long-term health and well being.” Prevention is the key to maintaining healthy teeth. There are several things parents can do to protect their child’s primary teeth: Don’t put your child to sleep with a bottle or sippy cup. Maintain a balanced healthy diet low in sugary and starchy foods is important. Get fluoride varnish treatments if your child is at risk for decay or sealants once their molars erupt. Promote brushing twice a day and visit the dentist twice a year.

Prevention based strategies are the focus of the Delta Dental of Arizona Foundation where grants are targeted to programs providing fluoride varnish treatments for young children at risk for cavities. School age children without dental insurance can receive dental screenings and sealants as part of school-based services. In the past ten years, the Foundation has given back more than \$2 million to the community to combat oral disease in Arizona. For more information on the Foundation, please visit www.deltadentalaz.com/foundation.

About Delta Dental of Arizona

Delta Dental of Arizona is the leading dental benefits provider in Arizona with the largest network of 2,800 dentists, servicing more than 4,500 locations. Passionate about oral health and its importance to generations of families, Delta Dental of Arizona has worked for 35 years to improve oral health by emphasizing preventative care and making dental coverage accessible for a wide variety of employers, groups and individuals. Delta Dental of Arizona, in partnership with EyeMed, introduces DeltaVision, quality vision insurance plans that make maintaining healthy eyesight affordable. Quality dental, vision and FSA benefits are now available from a single, trusted source. For more information about Delta Dental of Arizona, please visit the website at www.deltadentalaz.com.

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