



Tooth decay is the #1 chronic childhood illness in America. It can lead to health consequences that extend beyond the dental chair.

## Did you know?

- 1 in 5 U.S. children go without dental care.
- More than 40% of children have cavities by the time they reach kindergarten.
- Children with poor oral health are three times more likely to miss school as a result of dental pain.
- Emergency department care for dental complaints cost up to \$1.6 billion in 2012.
- Dental care is the most prevalent unmet health care need for special needs children.

Left untreated, severe tooth decay can lead to malnourishment, anemia, emergency surgery, life-threatening secondary infections and death. Seriously impacting self-esteem, employment prospects, social development and overall quality of life, untreated tooth decay and gum disease also have a direct correlation to heart disease, stroke, pulmonary disease and pre-term, low birth-weight babies.

With limited or no access to oral health care, children from impoverished families and some minority groups have a much higher rate of tooth decay. These children are at significant risk for impaired cognitive and social development, educational disparities and a lifetime of shame associated with dental disease.

While the Affordable Care Act expands dental benefit coverage for children, it does not address critical access to care issues caused by the loss of school-based dental education programs, state budget cuts, low reimbursement rates that prevent providers from accepting Medicaid patients, health professional shortage areas, and the overall lack of Medicaid dollars going toward dental care.

Lack of access to pediatric dental care creates a set of health disparities that impede wellness throughout adulthood. As a result, a significant burden is placed on local communities, growing poverty, negatively impacting long-term health, decreasing workforce productivity and draining personal and governmental financial resources.

## Tooth decay is preventable!

America's ToothFairy was formed to provide an aggressive collaborative response to eliminate children's preventable suffering from pediatric dental disease. Our extensive community-based network includes dental and health professionals, generous corporations, nonprofit health programs, civic and youth organizations, and caring individuals in every state.

Visit the **Get Involved** page on our website to learn how you can make a difference in your community!

