

Dental check-ups show a link between childhood obesity and cavities

Fredericton, NB – April 5, 2011 – “Dentists had been seeing regular improvement in the oral health of children in New Brunswick,” said Dr. Larry Peacocke, President of the NB Dental Society. “But, recently we have noticed a change in this trend. The incidence of cavities in children’s teeth is increasing along with their waistlines.”

Today's population has the highest proportion of overfed, malnourished, and physically inactive people in the history of the world. Poor diet choices are a major underlying cause of both obesity and caries (cavities).

Many processed foods contain high fructose corn syrup (HFCS), a processed sweetener that is many times sweeter and higher in energy (calories) than any natural food found on the planet. Naturally occurring oral bacteria metabolize the sugars and, in the process, produce acids that destroy a child's teeth. Meanwhile, the child is packing on extra pounds of fat because the body can't deal with the caloric and sugar overload. The end result is preventable caries and obesity, as well as a profound risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Dr. Peacocke said, “There are many things parents can do to counter this:

- Read food labels and try to minimize the amount of sweeteners your children consume.
- Keep visits to the fast food restaurants and consumption of soft drinks and high-sugar fruit drinks to a minimum.
- Try to eliminate processed foods from your shopping cart and consider eating like your grandparents did.
- It is important to take the time to remove dental plaque from children’s mouths until they are older and are able to do it themselves.”

The payoff? Dr. Peacocke said, “The result will be fewer obese kids who have more energy. The post-sugar crash will be eliminated, enhancing performance in school. And finally, dental check-ups will improve, reducing the need for remedial treatment, and saving money for the family. These make everyone involved smile.”

April is Oral Health Month and the New Brunswick Dental Society is participating with a public education campaign highlighting the message “Not everybody can see it. But your Dentist can.”

The New Brunswick Dental Society exists to promote professional growth, high ethical standards and quality care giving through communication, education and the regulation of dentistry in New Brunswick.