



Tiny Teeth Are A BIG Deal



The tooth fairy makes in-person and virtual visits to help improve the oral health of kids throughout Washington.

(NAPS)—With more than half of the state's third graders having experienced tooth decay, the Tooth Fairy is canvassing the state—virtually—to help improve the dental health habits of her young friends, in hopes of a cavity-free Washington.

“Children who experience tooth decay are more likely to miss school, have lower academic success, experience nutritional and speech development issues... and over time, become more susceptible to systemic inflammation, which may limit growth and development. It can also result in an increased risk for lifelong dental problems,” explains Abbie Goudarzi, DDS, a licensed dentist and Delta Dental consultant. “It's really unacceptable that more than half of our state's third graders have tooth decay, a number that's even higher in many rural and BIPOC communities.”

To help address the issue, the Tooth Fairy is making virtual appearances in classrooms and community-based youth organizations statewide as part of her interactive pediatric dental health education program, The Tooth Fairy Experience, designed to make dental health education fun for students in kindergarten through second grade.

The free 30-minute interactive presentations led by the Tooth Fairy are customized for each learning environment—including a storybook reading, fun teeth facts, proper brushing techniques, tooth science experiment, dental health hand puppets and a sugar demonstration. It's all aimed to improve dental health behaviors of kids as they enter their cavity-prone years, and to spur regular dental exams—which were down 17 percent statewide last year for 5-10-year-olds, claims data from the state's largest dental benefits provider reveal.

According to Delta Dental's National Children's Oral Health Survey, 30 percent of U.S. parents reported that their children (between the ages of 6 and 12) missed school in the previous year due to an oral health problem (as opposed to a regularly scheduled dental appointment).



Healthy smiles can result.

Children's dental care may not seem like a top priority considering kids lose their first set of teeth, but baby teeth are very important. Cavities early in a child's life can have long-term effects which linger far past the loss of baby teeth—it's why the program's website (www.TheToothFairyExperience.com) also offers helpful resources and tips for parents, including early signs of cavities:

- Pain around the tooth and gums when eating or brushing
- A new or increased sensitivity to hot or cold food and drinks
- Aversion to hard or crunchy foods
- Consistent bad breath
- Visible white spots on the teeth
- Holes or discoloration (cavities in their early stages will often appear as white spots, then become a light brown color as they progress. More serious cavities may turn a dark brown or even black)

Delta Dental reminds parents and caregivers that good dental health habits are important throughout a child's life and are particularly impactful during the formative years—and to educate themselves and their children on the importance of dental health, noting that “the Tooth Fairy will thank you!”

The Tooth Fairy Experience was developed by Delta Dental of Washington in partnership with Arcora Foundation and School Nurse Organization of Washington.

For free downloadable materials and information on scheduling a virtual Tooth Fairy Experience presentation, visit www.TheToothFairyExperience.com.