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| |  | | --- | | pictures of toothbrushes and toothpaste  **DENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM**  **The Big Picture??**  The public health dental program mission statement:  ***To promote the oral health of Floridians by assuring that community and school-based dental preventive and educational programs are available to all citizens and that access to dental care is available to indigent persons***.  **About dental disease**  Dental caries (decay) and periodontal diseases are chronic, progressive bacterial infections that afflict almost everyone, affecting the quality of life and consuming considerable health care resources.  Lack of early diagnostic, preventive and treatment services result in more expensive treatment at a later date as well as unnecessary pain and suffering.  A child experiencing dental problems is at high risk of poor educational outcomes ? with missed school days and possible residual effects on speech, nutrition and psychosocial functioning. Minor dental infections in adults can proceed to very serious, life-threatening situations if left untreated.  **Oral health facts**   * 50% of children have cavities in their teeth by age 7 * 84% of children have had decay in their permanent teeth by age 17 * Only 87% of adults are caries-free * 50% of adults experience periodontal infections   **The dentist as an early warning system**  Dentists can often discover more than cavities. Many health problems or diseases have oral signs and symptoms that dentists check for in addition to tooth problems.  Dentists look for everything from cancer and diabetes to eating disorders. According to the American Dental Association, more than 40 serious illnesses can appear in the mouth and tongue. Some of these include:   * vitamin deficiencies * leukemia * bulimia * infectious mononucleosis * sinusitis * herpes * AIDS * Hypertension * Oral cancer   Regular dental examinations are one of the best ways to maintain healthy teeth and gums, while taking care of the rest of the body, too!  **Florida and Jackson County**  Access to dental care for low-income individuals is offered in Florida through 29 of the county health department dental offices that accept Medicaid or offer a sliding fee scale for payment. Additionally, there are 15 community health centers with dental facilities for low-income patients.  The Jackson County Health Department's Dental Program offers a variety of services:   * Dental exams * X-rays * Cleaning * Fluoride Treatments * Fillings * Routine root canals * Routine extraction * Emergency care (during regular office hours only) | |