

Lessons In A Lunch Box: Healthy Teeth Essentials & Facts About Snacks®

WHAT - WHY - HOW - WHEN – WHERE

Revised 02/15/14

- 1) ***Lessons In A Lunch Box: Healthy Teeth Essentials & Facts About Snacks*** is an educational oral health literacy program developed around a lunch box designed exclusively to teach elementary school children. The lunch box includes a color coordinated carrot case with a rinse cup top designed to store a toothbrush, toothpaste, and dental floss.
- 2) The *Lessons In A Lunch Box* program is created to help children to begin learning early, throughout grade school, about taking care of their teeth, making good diet choices and careers in dentistry.

The Children's Oral Health Institute believes the Lessons In A Lunch Box program, and the exclusive lesson guides, including the Code Red: The Oral Health Crisis In Your Classroom booklet, will encourage teachers to incorporate oral health education as a part of the classroom instruction.

- 3) The program model is presented is to elementary schools with support from organized dentistry, local dental school faculty, their students and community volunteers. It is important that dentist examine and provide treatment for underserved children.

According to a report updated in 2007 from the ADA, only 19.6% of pediatric dentists treat children on Medicaid. Exposing dental students to programs like Lessons In A Lunch Box may help to improve the access to the oral health care challenges we face throughout the country.

- 4) Further, the profession of dental medicine is facing a workforce shortage. *According to the 2000 Surgeon General's Report, by 2020 there will be one dentist for every 100,000 Americans.* The program places emphasis on encouraging children to begin considering the dental profession as a career option. (Note the ADEA website, the list of dental schools, the professional dental organization logos, and the dental corporation covering the outside of the lunch container. Most of their websites provide a child-friendly introduction into the world of dentistry.)

5) The ideal times during the school year to introduce the *Lessons In A Lunch Box* program are:

- October, *National Dental Hygiene Month*. This is a good time of the school year to present the program because it allows the teacher approximately 8 school months to refer to the visual and practical lessons offered by lunch box.
- February, *National Children's Dental Health Month* (NCDHM). This is another great time because much of the dental community looks forward to participating in initiatives that highlight and support the annual observance of NCDHM when dental and medical professionals focus on efforts to improve the oral health of children.
- *Give Kids A Smile® (GKAS) Day*. Usually celebrated throughout the country in late January or early February, GKAS is the annual centerpiece NCDHM.

6) The cafeteria has proven to be the best location in the school to present the program. Students can comfortably have their lunch box open in front of them while listening to the presenter explain all of the fun and exciting educational features of the delightful container. They learn about the following:

- flossing, brushing and fluoride
- healthy dietary choices and good eating habits
- careers in dentistry