

Dental Decay Can Affect a Childs Ability to Learn

Painful teeth can affect a child's ability to learn and focus on their studies in school. A large number of children who have toothaches can't verbalize what is wrong. They simply exhibit symptoms like depression, lethargy, restlessness and crankiness. This is thought to be due to the fact, that a toothache comes on slowly and starts to cause a dull ache and the child doesn't recognize that there is something much different from normal and does not even bring it to the parents attention until it reaches the nerve and causes acute pain. I have seen this numerous times in my practice, children with large cavities in their teeth they deny having any discomfort and the parents are totally unaware that the child has cavities. The parents often do comment that they did notice the child was more cranky or lethargic recently but didn't know why.

According to the Surgeon General of the United States children lose an estimated 51 million school hours each year due to dental related problems. Studies show that children with even low grade pain tend to focus on their discomfort subconsciously and consequently do not absorb lessons and perform below their proven ability.

According to the American Journal of Public Health both learning ability and school attendance improve when children receive regular dental care. The start of the new school year is a great time to evaluate your child's dental health. Oral health is as important as booster shots and should be a regular part of school preparation.

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LA 70503. Answers will be addressed in this column as time and space permit.