**Children’s teeth are rotting. Do we need fluoride back in our water supply? The School of Public Policy releases new paper about this growing health problem**

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Calgary – Early Childhood Caries (ECC, formerly called “baby bottle decay) is a serious disease that is about much more than cavities on baby teeth. In Canada, it is a growing public health problem with adverse long-term effects on children's physical, emotional and intellectual well-being and a needless drain on costs in the public health-care system.

A paper released today by The School of Public Policy and authors Jennifer Zwicker, Carolyn Dudley and Herb Emery provides background on the etiology, risk factors and prevalence of ECC in Canada and a scope for the magnitude of this preventable disease in children.

The paper addresses three key areas for change.

* Need for increased public education and access to ECC prevention services for at-risk populations: Parents need to be informed of the causes of ECC and how to prevent it.
* Empower health-care professionals to integrate ECC prevention in their early visits with parents of young children. Knowledge is power.
* Government should invest in preventive oral health services for children rather than relying on emergency dental care: Children should have access to early preventive dental services to instill habits for lifetime oral health.

According to the paper ”While prevention really is the best medicine, there is a need to ensure that children who need dental care don’t see their first dentist in the emergency department.” An oral health prevention strategy for children that ensures all children have access to preventive dental care is the most cost-effective and efficient long-term strategy for oral health problems.

The paper can be downloaded at <http://www.policyschool.ucalgary.ca/?q=research>

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