

Green Pediatric Dentistry: Benefits children as well as the environment!

By Dr. Purvi Zavery

- So, you may ask, what is "green" dentistry? To me, it is about a dentist meeting the goal of providing best dental care to their patients but doing it in an environmentally friendly way. In a typical dental office there are many things that a dentist can do to make the office environmentally friendly, conserve our precious resources, and provide benefits to our health.
 - The choice of right dental equipment and materials can have a positive impact on the environment as well as children's health. Some of the dental equipment and materials considered "green" are:
 - Use of a dry vacuum instead of a traditional water based vacuum. A dry vacuum can save 500 gallons of water per day in a typical dental office!
 - Steam-based surgical sterilization unit vs. a chemical based sterilization unit. Steam based surgical sterilization units eliminate harmful chemical residue that pollutes our environment.
 - Use a digital imaging system for X-ray. Digital imaging eliminates the need for chemicals for processing x-rays and also reduces a child's radiation exposure by 90%!
 - Choosing not to use mercury for fillings can eliminate the need for processing/collecting mercury in a dental office.
 - While composite fillings are better for the environment and do not require any special handling for disposal.
 - By using computer based patient management system as well as digital charting and imaging, a dental office can eliminate the paper charts and also reduce the need to archive old records in a paper-based file system.



- Use of an electronic insurance filing system can eliminate the need for printing statements, faxing, or mailing through regular mail reducing the carbon footprint.
- For new offices, a dentist can do many things during the construction of a dental office to make it "green" for example:
 - Make sure that the general contractor recycles all the debris from the demolition of the existing office.
 - Choose flooring and cabinetry made of recycled material.
 - Select low-VOC (volatile organic compounds) paint for the walls – no dangerous vapors to inhale.
 - Use ultra-efficient lights with low power consumption.
 - Consider smartly designed ventilation system to reduce heating and cooling needs.
 - Incorporate sensor based lights, sensor based faucets (considerable amount of water savings).
 - Install eco-friendly TVs and monitors.

It's important that dentists start on a "green" journey so that we can conserve our precious resources as well as have a positive impact on children's health. This extra effort is worth it since it can make a big difference to the environment and to the lives of the children.

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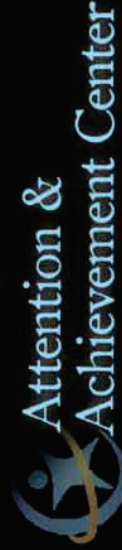
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