You know tooth decay is one of the main childhood diseases.

So much has changed in the 56 years since Dr. Spock recorded this clip, but sadly, his message still rings true for kids today. Tooth decay occurs when bacteria eat away at the outer layers of the teeth causing cavities, infection, and even tooth loss and potential cardiac disease.

About 20 percent of American kids are living with untreated tooth decay. Tooth decay can be a problem for any child. But kids from low income families bear a disproportionate burden.

Kids’ dental health has both an immediate and long term impact.

For some kids it’s a big social stigma. If they have teeth that are broken or obviously you know patients come from a state of tooth decay, they’re embarrassed.

Tooth decay is highly preventable. So why is it still such a problem? In part, the benefits of fluoridation have been countered by increased sugar intake. But the greatest barrier to kids dental health remains access to care.

In 2011, 10 million American kids lacked dental insurance. That access to care and affordability is critical if we’re going to have the prevention.
All kids deserve to have a healthy smile. We can help by expanding access to care through the school system. School-based dental health programs have shown great success. Let’s work together to make sure every kid has a healthy smile.