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TOOTHPRINTS: THE DENTAL ID FOR SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

One of parents' greatest fears is that their child will get lost or abducted. Indicative of this concern is the fact that thirty-four states have implemented AMBER alert systems to issue public alerts on missing children.

Like fingerprints, dental imprints are unique to every person. Consequently, bite impressions can serve as an accurate method of identification. Historically, fillings and dental x-rays were the primary basis for dental identification, but the successful fight against tooth decay has left many children with no cavities, and no dental records.

What is the Toothprints system?

Toothprints is a heat-activated wafer that pediatric dentists can use to record a child's dental imprint. The entire process is quite comfortable, as the small wafer is placed in the child's mouth for a short time, normally under five minutes. Parents are provided with the Toothprints impression for safekeeping. It is a product of Sybron Dental Specialties.

Why is it a valuable means of identification?

Each Toothprints impression shows the size and shape of the child's teeth, position of the teeth within the dental arch, and the relationship between the upper and lower jaws—all important information for identification.

Furthermore, a Toothprints impression offers other advantages. When a Toothprints impression is taken, sufficient proteins in the saliva remain on the wafer from which a DNA test can be successfully performed for yet a second means of identification. Also, since the Toothprints wafer is sealed in a plastic bag, enough scent remains for a trained dog to track with it.

The Toothprints system is not just for young children. Law enforcement officials rarely have identifying material on teenagers, yet teens are frequently lost, missing or abducted. Thus, a Toothprints impression offers a powerful recovery and identification component of any child's identification kit and will give parents peace of mind.

Recommended Toothprints Update Schedule

Yearly updates of Toothprints bite registrations are ideal. In lieu of that, the following schedule is recommended:

- **Initial impression:** Age 3 (or after all primary teeth have erupted)
- **Update:** Age 7 or 8 (or after the upper and lower permanent teeth have erupted)
- **Update:** Age 12 or 13 (or after all the permanent teeth, excluding the wisdom teeth, have erupted)

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