

Although dental problems don't command the instant fears associated with low birth weight, fetal death, or cholera, they do have the consequences of wearing down the stamina of children and defeating their ambitions. Bleeding gums, impacted teeth, and rotting teeth are routine matters for children I have interviewed...Children get used to feeling constant pain. They go to sleep with it. They go to school with it. Sometimes their teachers are alarmed and try to get them to a clinic. But it's all so slow and heavily encumbered with red tape and waiting lists...that dental care is long delayed. Children live for months with pain that grown-ups find unendurable. The gradual attrition of accepted pain erodes their energy and aspirations (Jonathan Kozol, 1991).

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