TO YOUR HEART'S CONTENT
HEART SUPPLEMENTS ENJOY HEALTHY AWARENESS

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By Janet Poveromo

Many parents have relied on entertainer Raffi singing “Brush Your Teeth” to encourage their children to form the good habit. But as awareness of healthier oral care options rise, parents are now relying on natural dental care products for their children as well.

While the conventional oral care market remains relatively flat, natural dental products manufacturers are seeing strong numbers. “Sales of our Children’s Tooth Gel grew 63 percent from 2007-2008 and 135 percent from 2008-2009,” said Jennifer Barckley, director of communications and editor-in-chief at Weleda (Palisades, NY). “As consumers gain awareness of potentially harmful ingredients, such as fluoride and sodium lauryl sulfate, and tune into the myriad of health benefits from consuming and using natural and organic foods and personal care products—natural oral care sales are, naturally, growing.”

Kristine Schreiber, director of brand marketing with The Natural Dentist (Medford, MA), reported that sales increased over the course of the past year, overcoming the downturn within the mouth rinse category and unit sales were up more than 12 percent.

And more good news is being reported. Organic Monitor, a marketing and information services company that specializes in the international organic food industry, has projected a 20-25 percent annual growth rate in the natural oral care sector over the next few years (roughly 2008-2011).

The Focus With Children’s Products

As far as innovation, Schreiber said there has been little in the oral care market. “When looking for cavity prevention (the No. 1 oral care concern of moms), a fluoride toothpaste and mouth rinse are key.” The Natural Dentist doesn’t use synthetic fluoride but rather sodium fluoride, derived from fluorite, a calcium fluoride-rich ore. The difference is with licensing. There are new properties being licensed, but nothing overwhelming. As far as natural ingredients are concerned, xylitol, a dentist-recommended, natural cleansing agent and non-cariogenic sweetener, has been getting a lot of attention. It has been added to a number of gum and mint products, and has shown promise for helping to prevent cavities as well. The Natural Dentist uses this in their children’s and adult products,” Schreiber added.

Santosh Krinsky, founder of Lotus Brands (Twin Lakes, WI), importer and distributor of Logona Natural Cosmetics, said LOGODENT Kids Dental Gels are formulated with the special needs of children’s oral care in mind. “Mild spearmint oil and natural strawberry fragrance are the primary flavorings of the gels,” he said. “Plant colorants make the dental gels visually appealing and fun. Xylitol is included based on research showing the benefits of xylitol for reduction of cavities. The products are not over-sweetened, so they do not create a cavity-favorable environment, or train children’s taste buds to crave sweets, which is a self-defeating proposition in most oral care products.”

The products also contain extracts of echinacea and green tea to effectively retard the development of bacteria; witch hazel, chamomile and myrrh care for sensitive gum tissues and help prevent infection. A small amount of fine silica works with the brush to remove plaque gently.

“Knowing that children often don’t use proper brushing technique, and that they often swallow toothpaste, we use only the gen-
tles of sudsing agents to help disperse the herbal ingredients into hard-to-reach areas," Krinsky added. LOGO-DENT dental gels for kids contain no synthetic fluoride, synthetic preservatives, colorants or fragrances, and they are vegan and gluten-free.

Weleda also offers a fluoride-free children's products. "Fluoride-free is important, as fluoride consumed in uncontrolled doses—especially by children—can be harmful," explained Barkley. "Many children will eagerly consume large amounts of toothpaste—sometimes even an entire tube at once. The amount of fluoride they are taking in, as such, is not a medically prescribed dose, and the consequences are often unknown. Many conventional types of toothpaste, including those for children, have a warning label that tells the consumer to 'call poison control if ingested.' Considering that toothpastes go in our mouth and are certainly swallowed in many cases, Weleda (and some other natural toothpaste manufacturers) avoids using fluoride and potentially hazardous ingredients in its oral care products for adults and children."

Weleda's Children's Tooth Gel has a sweet and refreshing taste that includes calendula, spearmint and fennel, Barkley said. "It is also important that the delicate gums, especially those of children, are given gentle care. Soothing and anti-inflammatory plant extracts, such as calendula, support and care for the gums and teeth."

In addition to tooth cleaning agents, it is essential to recognize the importance of the proper toothbrushes for children as well. Lotus Brands represents three manufacturers of children's natural toothbrushes: Smile Brite, Fuchs and Eco-Dent.

Smile Brite has developed a specifically designed range of toothbrushes for children under the Smile Bunnies trademark. This includes some standard children's brushes and a child's first brush, which has special handle and bristle field configurations, and extra soft bristles to protect children's teeth as they begin to develop their tooth brushing habits.

Fuchs has long sold the best selling children's natural and nylon bristle toothbrushes with a special easy-hold grip designed to make it easy for children to brush, according to Krinsky.

Eco-Dent has created a state-of-the-art TerraDent Funbrush for children, featuring a special bristle field, replaceable head technology, so children learn about ecological benefits at the same time, and a unique thermo-welded head that has been shown to carry the lowest bacteria load of any major toothbrush tested by independent tests in Europe. The Funbrush also has a special grip with a smiley face logo to aid children in getting the right grip on their toothbrush.

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Product Standards
The American Dental Association (ADA) seal, though the most recognizable, is not the only standard natural dental care manufacturers carry. “We think they [seals and certifications] are important, but less important than having products that really work,” said Schreiber. “Our Kids Cavity Zapper Rinse has the ADA seal and we’ll submit our new Kids Cavity Zapper Groovy Grape Toothpaste for the upcoming ADA Council on Scientific Affairs meeting this summer. We realize this is something that moms are looking for as a badge of safety and endorsement, especially for their kids.”

At Weleda, Barkley said the company has very clear standards for its products: no synthetic preservatives, no synthetic fragrances, no synthetic chemicals, no synthetic anything. “To help the consumer know that when we say we are natural, we mean we are natural (and beyond)—we work with third-party certification bodies,” Barkley continued. She noted that NaTrue is the leading ‘natural’ and ‘organic’ label, specifically for skin care products, which appears on Weleda’s product packaging. It is an international, non-profit organization of natural and organic cosmetic manufacturers that aims to provide guidance and reassurance to consumers around the world by offering very strict, detailed standards for certification. LOGODENT products carry the BDIN natural certification as well as the NaTrue seal.

But ultimately, getting kids to take care of their teeth and establishing a good oral care regimen is essential to a healthy growing mouth and healthy growing body, concluded Schreiber. “By providing kids with products that are fun, great tasting and effective, we think we’re making it possible to achieve great oral hygiene with minimal dissent. Parents that insist good oral hygiene practices early will benefit their children through adulthood, ensuring a lifetime of a healthy mouth.”

For More Information:
• Lotus Brands, (262) 889-8561
• The Natural Dentist, (800) 615-6895
• Weleda, (800) 241-1030

Research Update

Fish Oil Improves Immune Illness Symptoms
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can lead to blood clots and organ failure.

“The results of this study are very encouraging, because they suggest a way that the condition of these very sick patients can be improved,” said Philip Calder, a professor of nutritional immunology at the University’s School of Medicine and leader of the study.

Calder and his colleagues found that the patients given fish oil had lower levels of inflammatory agents in their blood, were able to achieve better lung function and left the hospital earlier than those who received traditional nutrition.

The study was conducted at the Hospital Padre Americo in Portugal and was published January 19 in Critical Care.

Research Shows D Deficiency Among Darker Skinned Individuals

Recommended intakes for people with darker skin should be increased to 2100-3100 IU per day all year round, up from the current adequate intakes set at 200 IU, said University of California, Davis researchers in their findings appearing in the Journal of Nutrition.

The conclusions of the study, led by Laura Hill, were based on data from four cohorts of participants involving 72 people. The participants, from Davis, CA, were followed for up to two months during each of the four seasons. Vitamin D levels were predicted using a computational model, based on sun exposure and skin reflectance.

According to researchers, in order to achieve vitamin D sufficiency, people of European ancestry with a high sun exposure need 1300 IU per day of the vitamin during the winter. People of African ancestry with low sun exposure would require much higher intakes, from 2100 to 3100 IU per day throughout the year, they said.