



HEALTHY HABITS FOR HEALTHY SMILES

Promoting National Children's Dental Health Month

February 28, 2024 – District Health Department #10 (DHD#10), along with the Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance, is highlighting the importance of good oral hygiene for children during National Children's Dental Health Month in February. This health observance brings together thousands of professionals, healthcare providers, and educators to support children, their caregivers, teachers, and many others. The American Dental Association (ADA) 2024 campaign slogan is “Healthy Habits for Healthy Smiles.”

“Building good oral health habits as a child is key to a lifetime of healthy mouths,” says Elizabeth Johnson, DHD#10 Oral Health Coordinator and Registered Dental Hygienist. “We encourage parents, guardians, educators, and community members to work together to make dental care a regular part of every child’s daily routine.”

Key points for National Children's Dental Health Month, supported by the ADA:

- **Brush and Floss Every Day:** This simple routine helps prevent cavities, gum disease, and other oral health issues from infancy through adulthood.
- **Healthy Eating for Healthy Teeth:** A balanced diet is crucial for strong teeth and gums. Encourage children to choose healthy snacks like fruits, vegetables, and dairy products over sugary treats. Sugars and starches contribute to plaque, which can attack tooth enamel.
- **Regular Dental Check-ups:** The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends that children have a regular dental provider, or dental home, by age 1. Finding and fixing problems early can prevent more significant dental issues later.
- **Infant Support:** Place only formula or breast milk in bottles, not sugary drinks. Ensure the bottle is removed before putting the infant down for sleep. Encourage children to drink from a cup by their first birthday. Discourage prolonged use of sippy cups. Provide clean pacifiers – don’t put them in your mouth or dip them in something sweet before giving them to your child.
- **Oral Health Services:** DHD#10 supports families with oral screenings and fluoride varnish applications for children aged 6 to 35 months enrolled in our WIC program and/or eligible for Medicaid. Led by registered nurses, this initiative complements regular dental care and is helpful for those at high risk of cavities and gum disease. Applications can be done up to four times a year. The goal is to prevent tooth decay and encourage regular dental care.
- **Seal! Michigan:** DHD#10 also participates in SEAL! Michigan, a program which offers dental sealants and oral health education to students in school-based settings. Contact your local school district to see if they participate in this program.



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local health
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public health.

- Kindergarten Oral Health Assessments (KOHA): Now a required part of readiness activities for Kindergarten enrollment, DHD#10 offers free oral health assessments during pre-enrollment school events and will refer students to a local dental home.

DHD#10 recognizes the effort needed to prioritize children's dental health. By working together, we can ensure that every child in our area grows up with a healthy and confident smile. To learn more about DHD#10's dental health services, please visit: <https://www.dhd10.org/parents-families/dental-health-clinics/>.

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