

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **February is Children's Dental Health Month**

YOURTOWN, MD (February XX, 2011) – Did you know that tooth decay (cavities) is the most common chronic disease found in children? It is five times as common as asthma and seven times as common as hay fever.

Each year, more than 51 million school hours are lost due to dental problems. Untreated, tooth decay causes pain and infections that may lead to problems with eating, speaking, playing, and learning. Fortunately, with good oral health care habits, tooth decay can be prevented.

“It is important for parents to teach their children good dental health care habits, including proper brushing with fluoride toothpaste and flossing techniques, eating nutritious foods without sugar, and having regular visits to the dentist,” said \_\_\_\_\_ (Local Health Department Officer). Steps such as these will help ensure that children will have a healthy mouth, as well as a healthy body. Since children learn oral health care from their parents, it is important that parents serve as role models and practice good oral health care habits. Parents should supervise brushing until children are seven to eight years old.

Elementary and Middle school age children can discover the power of a healthy smile with MouthPower® Online, an entertaining and innovative Web site sponsored by the National Museum of Dentistry and the American Dental Association. Children can explore Mouthie's interactive online laboratory to learn how to keep their smiles sparkling. They can learn how to brush and floss, make healthy food choices, and steer clear of the pitfalls of tobacco. After completing the program that entails “earning” teeth, children can download a personalized certificate. The program is available in English and Spanish at [www.MouthPower.org](http://www.MouthPower.org).

Children can also test their dental knowledge by playing the "Million Dollar Smile" and "Dental Jeopardy" games by visiting the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Office of Oral Health website at <http://dhmh.maryland.gov> and clicking on *Children's Dental Health Month* under 'Hot Topics.'

For more information about oral health programs and services available in Maryland and in your local area, visit <http://dhmh.maryland.gov> or contact (YOUR LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT) for more information.

### **Tips for Preventing Tooth Decay in Children**

- ✓ Schedule a child's first dental visit when his or her first tooth appears, or by the first birthday.
- ✓ Provide children with healthy snacks such as fruits and vegetables and avoid sugary foods and drinks. Give them water to drink between meals.
- ✓ Have your child brush with toothpaste that has fluoride at least twice a day for two minutes. Children need brushing supervision until seven to eight years of age.
- ✓ Ask your children's dentist about the need for fluoride treatment.
- ✓ Check with your local health department or water board or have your water tested to determine the amount of fluoride in your water. If it is too low to prevent tooth decay, ask your dentist or physician about fluoride supplements.
- ✓ Ask about dental sealants when your child's permanent teeth come in.

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