

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For Information Contact:

(Your Name)

(Your Phone Number)

February is Children's Dental Health Month

YOURTOWN, MD (February XX, 2013)-A healthy mouth is important for the overall health of infants, toddlers, and children. Poor oral health can cause children to have problems with eating, speaking, and learning. Each year, more than 51 million school hours are missed due to dental problems. Cavities can cause children pain and serious health problems. Fortunately, parents can prevent cavities by taking care of their children's mouths every day.

Parents can care for their children's mouths by following a few easy guidelines. First, they should clean their baby's gums with a soft toothbrush or clean washcloth before teeth come in. Once teeth come in, parents should brush their child's teeth with a certain amount of fluoride toothpaste, depending upon the child's age, twice a day, every day. Additionally, parents should take children to the dentist. Children should visit the dentist by their first birthday and regularly after that. Do not give children bottles in bed or at nap time. Give children milk or water instead of sugary drinks like soda, juice or punch. Finally, parents should not share food, spoons, or forks as these can spread the germs that can cause cavities. "Incorporating habits such as these into their everyday lives will ensure that children have a healthy mouth as well as a healthy body," said _____ (Local Health Department Officer). For more information, visit www.healthyteethhealthykids.org.

Families can discover the power of a healthy smile by exploring two interactive web-based programs hosted by the University of Maryland Dental School's National Museum of Dentistry, a member of the Smithsonian Institution Affiliations Program. MouthPower® Online

is an entertaining program suited for elementary school age children. Developed in conjunction with 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. For older children and adults, the "Your Spitting Image" website www.dentalmuseum.org/ysi/Your_Spitting_Image provides an opportunity to unlock the mysteries of the body to reveal what your mouth says about you. This three part online exhibit explores the future of dentistry through forensics, saliva and bioengineering. Key scientific topics include DNA, genetics, the mouth/body connection and stem cells.

Families can also test their dental knowledge by playing the "Million Dollar Smile" and "Dental Jeopardy, Elementary and Advanced Edition" games by visiting the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Office of Oral Health website at <http://fha.dhmh.maryland.gov/oralhealth>.

For more information about oral health programs and services available in Maryland and in your local area, visit <http://fha.dhmh.maryland.gov/oralhealth> 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.
- ✓ Your child's teeth should be brushed with toothpaste that has fluoride at least twice a day for two minutes. The amount of toothpaste that goes on the toothbrush depends on the child's age. 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.