

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For Information Contact:
(Your Name)
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February is Children’s Dental Health Month

YOURTOWN, MD (February XX, 2012) – 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 and dietary 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 and flossing until children are seven to eight years old.

Families can discover the power of a healthy smile by exploring two interactive web-based programs hosted by the 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.maryland.gov/oralhealth/>.

For more information about oral health programs and services available in Maryland and in your local area, visit <http://fha.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.
- ✓ 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.

