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Maryland Looks to Reach Communities During National Children's Dental Health Month

Brushing with fluoride toothpaste remains foremost in keeping children's teeth healthy

YOURTOWN, MD (February XX, 2019)

February is National Children's Dental Health Month. Every February, thousands of dental organizations and providers throughout the nation take time to inform and educate the public about the importance of children's oral health. This February, the Maryland Department of Health, Office of Oral Health will join the American Dental Association to promote the 2019 National Children's Dental Health Month theme, "Brush and clean in between to build a healthy smile."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, tooth decay is the single most common chronic disease among U.S. children. Left untreated, tooth decay can cause pain and infections as well as problems eating, speaking, and learning. Tooth decay is responsible for more than 51 million lost school hours each year. In the U.S., more than 16 million children go each year without seeing a dentist.

The Office of Oral Health reiterates the American Dental Association's message about the importance of brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and cleaning in between the teeth for a healthy smile. The Office of Oral Health offers a number of resources online, including brochures and interactive games that educate parents and their children about the importance of brushing with fluoride toothpaste, flossing, eliminating sugary foods and drinks from the diet, and seeing their dentist on a regular basis.

"National Children's Dental Health Month is the perfect opportunity to increase public awareness about the importance of children's oral health" said **INSERT LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE**. "Tooth decay, though very common in children, is almost 100 percent preventable. Scheduling your child's first dental visit by age one and making sure they brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste are some of the best things you can do for your child's oral health."



Tips for Preventing Tooth Decay in Children

- ✓ **First dental visit by 1st birthday.** Schedule your child's first dental visit when his or her first tooth appears, or by the first birthday. Maintain regular dental visits for your child from then on.
- ✓ **Avoid sugary foods and drinks.** Provide children with healthy snacks such as fruits and vegetables, and avoid sugary foods and drinks. Give them water to drink between meals.
- ✓ **Brush with fluoride toothpaste.** Brush your child's teeth 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.
- ✓ **Drink tap water.** Ninety four percent of Maryland's public water supply (tap water) contains an appropriate amount of fluoride to help prevent cavities. Make sure your children drink fluoridated water. Most bottled water does not contain fluoride. If you are unsure about the cleanliness of your water, it is OK to filter your tap water with over-the-counter water filters. This will not remove cavity preventing fluoride. If you have well water or if you're unsure if your water supply contains adequate amounts of fluoride, check with your local health department or water board.
- ✓ **Talk to your dentist.** Talk to your child's dentist about a cavity prevention plan for your child. Ask your dentist if your child is getting appropriate amounts of fluoride. Your dentist may prescribe a special toothpaste or fluoride drops or tablets. Your dentist may also recommend fluoride treatments.
- ✓ **Dental Sealants.** Make sure your child gets dental sealants when their back permanent teeth (molars) first come in. Dental sealants cover the surfaces of the molars to protect against cavities. Your child can get them at their dental office or through the Maryland School Dental Sealant Program. Check with your local health department.

For additional tips and resources, visit the Maryland Office of Oral Health at health.maryland.gov/oral-health .