



Genesee County Health Department

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Immediate Release

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RE: February is Children's Dental Health Month

The Genesee County Health Department reminds you that February is Children's Dental Health Month. Tooth decay is the most common childhood disease in the United States, five times more common than asthma. Kids miss out on more than 51 million hours of school each year due to dental disease. Children with cavities have trouble eating, sleeping and learning in the classroom. Dental decay is preventable, so it is never too late to help your children develop good oral habits.

Begin cleaning your baby's mouth during the first few days after birth with a clean, moist gauze pad or washcloth. All 20 baby teeth are in the jaw at birth, so this is the perfect time to begin oral care. Breast milk and cow's milk contain sugar, so it is important to clean the teeth as they start to grow in. Don't share cups or silverware with baby. This prevents sharing the germs from your mouth that cause decay in babies. Teething starts at around 6 months and drooling is a sure sign.

The American Dental Association recommends that the first dental visit take place within 6 months after the first tooth appears; but no later than a child's first birthday. Parents play a big role in making the first dental visit a good experience. Don't let your fear influence the first visit to the dentist. By pre-school age, kids should visit the dentist yearly.

Help children under 3 years brush their teeth, using a small smear of paste (the size of a grain of rice). Brush teeth twice per day (morning and night). Supervise them so they don't swallow tooth paste as it contains fluoride. For children 3 to 6 years of age, use a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Continue to provide adult supervision until they have the skills to brush on their own.

Don't wait for children to start school or until a mouth emergency, to establish a dental home. For more information on dental health visit: <http://www.aapd.org/>, <http://www.smilegenesee.com/> or <http://www.deltadentalmi.com/>. The Genesee County Health Department's motto is "Better Life Through Better Health."

Better Life Through Better Health

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