

For Immediate Release

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February is National Children's Dental Health Month

WAUSEON: February is National Children's Dental Health Month. According to the American Dental Association (ADA), Americans are consuming more foods and drinks with high sugar and starch content than ever before. This steady diet of sugary foods and drinks can ruin teeth and the tendency to "graze" throughout the day increases the risk. Sugar on the teeth creates the perfect environment for bacteria which go on to produce acid that eats away at the enamel of the teeth.

The ADA says when there are teeth in the mouth, there is risk for tooth decay. How can parents prevent this from happening? Putting baby to bed with a bottle, while convenient, is not recommended. It's better to have baby finish the bottle before putting them down to sleep. By the time baby is one year of age, encourage them to drink from a cup. Training or sippy cups are often used to transition to a cup, but should only be used temporarily. If the toddler is allowed to carry the sippy cup around for extended periods of time, this constant exposure to even natural sugars found in juice or milk is not ideal. Plus, there is the potential for falling and injuring the mouth while walking and drinking from the cup. Once your baby has teeth, you can begin brushing them. Talk to your dentist about when to begin regular visits.

As children grow and become more active, the potential for injury to the teeth exists. Playing a sport, even non-contact sports like gymnastics and rollerblading can result in injury. There are comfortable, affordable mouth guards to help prevent this. Of course, your dental provider will advise how to handle dental emergencies. For a knocked-out tooth, most recommend finding the tooth, holding the tooth by the crown, and rinsing the root in water if the tooth is dirty. If possible, the tooth can be gently inserted into its socket in the mouth, but if that isn't an option, put the tooth in a cup of milk. Either way, head to the dentist immediately so reimplantation can be attempted.

The ADA says “your mouth is the gateway to your body” and stresses the importance of maintaining good oral health into adulthood. Research is showing that unhealthy bacteria and infections in the mouth not only harm your teeth and gums, but may be associated with heart disease, stroke, diabetes, pneumonia and other health problems. Mature adults sometimes wonder why they are getting cavities when they haven’t had them in years. One common cause is dry mouth, which is not a normal part of aging. But many medications prescribed for allergies, high blood pressure, and pain can cause dry mouth. Drinking more water, chewing sugar free gum, and using over-the-counter oral moisturizers can help relieve dry mouth symptoms and prevent cavities. Tobacco use can also lead to poor oral health.

Healthy habits that can keep your mouth healthy include brushing and flossing daily, visiting a dentist regularly, drinking water with fluoride, quitting smoking, and cleaning dentures daily. It’s also important to eat a balanced diet and limit between-meal snacks. Most importantly, visit a dentist regularly!

We have wonderful dental providers in Fulton County. The Bryan Community Health Center (567-239-4562) has a dental clinic and provides services on a sliding fee scale based on your income. This may be helpful if you do not have dental insurance; you do not have to be a medical patient at the clinic to receive dental services. For mature adults on Medicare, which does not cover routine dental visits, the Bryan Clinic may be a good option, especially when one has a “fixed” income.

Please contact your Fulton County Health Department at 419-337-0915 if you need additional information about dental providers in our community. We want to keep you smiling!

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