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Maryland Reaches Out to Community During National Children's Dental Health Month

YOURTOWN, MD (February XX, 2017)- February is National Children's Dental Health Month (NCDHM). Every February, thousands of dental organizations and providers throughout the nation take time to engage in special educational programs about the importance of children's oral health. This February, the Maryland Office of Oral Health (OOH) has planned a variety of campaigns and educational activities and is providing resources and materials to the public to help educate children about the importance of proper oral health.

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

Low income and minority children, especially those of Hispanic background, are disproportionately affected by poor oral health and have a greater number of untreated cavities. According to the Maryland Oral Health Survey of School Children, 2011-2012, Hispanic children in Maryland are less likely to visit the dentist and more likely to lack dental insurance.

To address these issues, the OOH will work with the Maryland Dental Action Coalition (MDAC) to promote the Coalition's highly successful Dientes Sanos, Niños Sanos campaign this February and March. This radio, social media, internet and community outreach campaign targets Spanish speaking women who reside in Montgomery, Prince Georges, Baltimore County and Baltimore City. The Dientes Sanos, Niños Sanos campaign ran during NCDHM in 2014 and made a significant impact among Latinas resulting in more Latinas better understanding the importance of oral health and taking action to practice preventative oral health behaviors for themselves and their children.

The OOH will also join in the American Dental Association's (ADA) national campaign during NCDHM to encourage drinking tap water. Most, (93%) of tap water in Maryland contains Fluoride. Fluoride prevents cavities. Getting fluoride onto the teeth by drinking fluoridated tap water or brushing twice a day with a toothpaste that contains fluoride is the single most effective way to prevent cavities. The OOH offers a number of educational resources online as well as brochures and posters that educate children about the importance of drinking fluoridated water and brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.

“National Children’s Dental Health Month is a wonderful opportunity to take advantage of increased public awareness about the importance of children’s oral health” said **INSERT LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE**. “Many people don’t realize that tooth decay, though very common in children, it is nearly 100 percent preventable! Every parent should know that good oral health is important and that cavities are pretty easy to prevent. Starting good oral health habits in children at an early age and scheduling regular dental visits will help children get off to a healthy start and maintain a lifetime of healthy teeth and gums.”

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.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Ask your child’s dentist about the need for fluoride treatment.
- ✓ If your water comes from a public water system, check with your local health department or water board to see if your water has an adequate amount of fluoride in it. If not, ask your dentist or physician about fluoride tablets or drops.
- ✓ If your water comes from a private well, check with your local health department or water board to 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 tablets or drops.
- ✓ Ask about dental sealants when your child’s back permanent teeth first come in

For Additional Tips and Resources visit:

Maryland Office of Oral Health : <http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/oralhealth>

Dientes Sanos, Niños Sanos campaign: <http://www.dientessanosninossanos.org/> or www.healthyteethhealthykids.com

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