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National Children’s Dental Health Month—Importance of Oral Health *Brushing with fluoride toothpaste remains foremost in keeping children’s teeth healthy*

Baltimore, MD (February 6, 2018) — February is National Children’s Dental Health Month and 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’s Office of Oral Health will join with the American Dental Association to promote the 2018 National Children’s Dental Health Month theme, *Brush Your Teeth with Fluoride Toothpaste and Clean between Your Teeth for 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 United States, more than 16 million children go each year without seeing a dentist.

In the mid-20th century the public was introduced to the idea of brushing teeth with fluoride toothpaste. This idea remains important today for good reason — fluoride prevents cavities. The evidence is overwhelming. Getting fluoride onto the teeth by brushing twice a day with a toothpaste that contains fluoride or by drinking fluoridated water are highly effective ways to prevent cavities.

The Department joins the American Dental Association to communicate the importance of brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and cleaning in between the teeth for a healthy smile. The Department offers many educational resources online including brochures and posters that educate parents and their children about the importance of brushing with fluoride toothpaste, flossing, eliminating sugary foods and drinks from the diet, and regular dental visits that help parents keep their child’s mouth healthy.

“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 Department Public Health deputy secretary, Dr. Howard Haft. “Many people don’t realize that tooth decay, though very common in children, is almost 100 percent preventable. Start good oral health habits in children at an early age and make sure that kids brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste. This and scheduling their first dental visit by age one will get children off to a healthy start and begin a lifetime of healthy teeth and gums.”

For additional tips and resources visit www.OralHealth4BetterHealth.org.

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