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## February is Children's Dental Health Month

Stanton- Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD), in conjunction with Michigan Community Dental Clinics, and local dentists, reminds you to give your child a smile that lasts a lifetime. February is National Children's Dental Health Month, which brings an increased focus on the importance of regular dental check-ups and a balanced diet.

Oral health is such an important part of a child's overall good health, and yet it can be over-looked in young children.

Good health habits should begin with an introductory visit to the dentist after the first tooth erupts or before a child's first birthday. A balanced diet, limited snacks, daily brushing and flossing and regular check-ups are the keys to healthy teeth and gums.

Bottles and pacifiers also impact a child's oral health. Here are some tips from the American Dental Association to keep your young child's mouth healthy:

- Place only formula, milk or breast milk in bottles. Avoid filling the bottle with liquids such as sugar water, juice or soft drinks.
- Infants should finish their bedtime and naptime bottles before going to bed.
- If your child uses a pacifier, provide one that is clean—don't dip it in sugar or honey, or put it in your mouth before giving it to the child.
- Encourage children to drink from a cup by their first birthday and discourage frequent or prolonged use of sippy cups.
- Serve nutritious snacks and limit sweets to mealtimes.

Older children should follow the same rules of regular brushing, flossing, dental visits and eating a balanced diet, and avoiding sugary beverages like juice and soft drinks. Sugars and starches encourage the production of plaque, which can attack tooth enamel. Also, it's not just the sugar in soft drinks that decays teeth; it's the acid too.

The Montcalm Area Dental Clinic, operated by Michigan Community Dental Clinics, on behalf of MMDHD, focuses on serving persons enrolled in Medicaid and low-income uninsured. The clinic is accepting new patients and encourages dental visits by age one, which creates a positive experience and establishes a dental home before problems arise. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call 877-313-6232.

*Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.*

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