

For Immediate Release

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Healthy Mouth Equals Happy Teeth

GTCHD prioritizes children's dental health for a healthier smile and lifestyle

February marks the month-long celebration known as [National Children's Dental Health Month](#), which helps raise awareness and reinforce the importance of children's oral health. The Grand Traverse County Health Department (GTCHD), together with the Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance, would like to emphasize the importance of healthy dental habits that start at a young age.

"Dental cavities are indeed a widespread concern, and it's critical to address this issue early in a child's life," said Dr. Thomas Shoniker, DDS, at Dental Clinics North (DCN). "By prioritizing routine examinations and early detection, we can prevent the development of more serious dental problems later. I also believe that educating both parents and children about the importance of oral hygiene is essential."

Key Healthy Oral Hygiene Habits:

- **Brush and Floss Daily:** Ensure that your child is brushing and flossing their teeth two times a day to help prevent cavities and gum disease. Use fluorinated toothpaste to prevent cavities, according to the American Dental Association (ADA). Help your child brush their teeth until good brushing skills are established.
- **Healthy Habits for Babies:** Wipe the infant's gums twice a day with a soft, clean cloth, in the morning after the first feeding and right before bed to help wipe away bacteria and sugars that can cause cavities. Making sure that only breastmilk or formulas are put into bottles also helps minimize your baby's exposure to sugars and bacteria.
- **Healthy Foods:** Calcium is essential for forming and maintaining healthy bones and teeth. According to the ADA, the recommended daily amount of calcium for children aged 1-3 years is equal to two and a half cups of milk or six slices of cheese. Calcium is absorbed from the intestines into the blood. Dairy products such as cheese or yogurt, or foods fortified with calcium are great ways to meet your child's recommended amount of calcium.
- **Avoid sugary snacks and drinks between meals** to help prevent cavities from forming. Avoid sticky sugary foods such as caramel, gummy candies, dried fruits, and toffee to help reduce sugar on the teeth. If your child does eat these foods, help them brush their teeth afterward.
- **Regular Dental Check-ups:** Bring your child to the dentist every six months to help ensure none of their new teeth are being damaged by cavities. This will also help make your child more comfortable in a dental setting.

GTCHD works together with DCN to provide affordable oral care for qualifying residents, including children and adults. Services offered include oral exams, cleanings, fluoride treatments, fillings, and education. DCN is located at 2600 LaFranier Road, Suite B, Traverse City. To schedule an appointment, please call 1-877-321-7070 or visit [DCN's website](#).

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