



NEWS RELEASE

St. Charles County Government

Department of Community Health and the Environment

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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START KIDS ON THE PATH TO GOOD ORAL HYGIENE

Children's Dental Health Month Offers Tips for Developing a Healthy Smile

St. Charles County, Missouri – Each February, the American Dental Association (ADA) sponsors National Children's Dental Health Month to raise awareness about the importance of oral health. Parents sometimes overlook the care of their children's teeth, which can lead to damaging results that affect future aspects of life.

Tooth damage can occur as soon as teeth appear in a child's mouth — especially with the excess sugar in today's diet. An early risk (sometimes called baby bottle tooth decay or nursing mouth syndrome) is prolonged exposure to liquids containing sugar, such as fruit juice, milk or formula. Later in life, the risk continues, as Americans of all ages consume larger portions of foods and drinks that are higher in sugar and starches than ever before. Threats also exist to active kids, as thousands suffer dental injuries each year while playing sports, skateboarding, bicycling, and other activities without a properly fitted mouth guard.

To prevent oral disease, the ADA recommends brushing teeth and flossing every day. Before teeth are visible in infants, parents should wipe gums with a clean, moist washcloth to limit excess sugars. As the teeth develop, dentists suggest brushing with a child-size toothbrush and a pea-sized amount of toothpaste. Be sure the child spits out any excess toothpaste and rinses after finishing. Parents should brush their child's teeth until age six to ensure proper practice. In addition, the ADA recommends beginning regular dentist visits around six months after a child's first tooth appears or at least before the child's first birthday.

The Division of Public Health's education team presents several entertaining programs that promote good health and hygiene. Designed for pre-school and school groups, these free programs can be scheduled by calling **Brittany Camacho** or **Molly Rollins** at 636-949-7400. In addition, the ADA website (<http://www.ada.org/2714.aspx>) features a number of fun activities — including coloring sheets, puzzles, and games — that parents or teachers may use to encourage their children to follow proper dental hygiene.

The St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment is committed to the protection and enhancement of health and the quality of life for all members of our community. For information on programs offered and to discover ways the Department assists our community, please visit www.scchealth.org or call 636-949-7400.

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