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BLDHD is Promoting National Children's Dental Health Month

Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department (BLDHD), along with the Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance (NMPHA), is proud to promote National Children's Dental Health Month in February, highlighting the importance of good oral hygiene for children. This month-long national health observance brings together thousands of professionals, healthcare providers, and educators to promote the benefits of good oral health to children, their caregivers, teachers, and many others. The American Dental Association (ADA) [2024 campaign slogan](#) is "Healthy Habits for Healthy Smiles."

"Building good oral health habits during childhood is key to a lifetime of healthy mouths," said Dr. Joshua Meyerson, Medical Director. "BLDHD calls on parents, guardians, educators, and community members to work together to make dental care a regular part of every child's routine."

Key points for National Children's Dental Health Month, supported by the ADA:

- **Brush and Floss Every Day:** BLDHD encourages families to make daily toothbrushing and flossing a habit. These simple routines help prevent cavities, gum disease, and other oral health issues from infancy all the way through adulthood.
- **Healthy Eating for Healthy Teeth:** A balanced diet is crucial for strong teeth and gums. Encourage children to choose healthy snacks like fruits, vegetables, and dairy products over sugary treats. Sugars and starches encourage the production of plaque, which can attack tooth enamel.
- **Regular Dental Check-ups:** Schedule regular dental check-ups for your child to catch issues early on. American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends that children find a regular dental provider, or dental home, by age 1. Finding and fixing problems early can prevent more significant dental issues later.
- **Infant Support:** Place only formula or breast milk in bottles, not sugary drinks. Ensure the bottle is removed before putting the infant down for sleep. Encourage children to drink from a cup by their first birthday. Discourage prolonged use of sippy cups. Provide clean pacifiers – don't put them in your mouth or dip them in something sweet before giving them to your child.
- **Oral Health Services at BLDHD:** BLDHD is here to support families with oral screenings and varnish applications for children aged 6 months to 35 months enrolled in our WIC program and/or eligible for Medicaid. Fluoride varnish is endorsed by the ADA and is approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Led by trained Registered Nurses, this initiative complements regular dental care and is particularly helpful for those at high risk of cavities and gum disease, with applications done up to four times a year. The goal is to prevent tooth decay and encourage regular dental care.

BLDHD recognizes the effort needed from the community to prioritize children's dental health. By working together, we can ensure that every child in our district grows up with a healthy and confident smile.

Media Contact:

Rachel Pomeroy, PIO

231-882-6085

RPomeroy@bldhd.org

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