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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Healthy Mouth Equals Happy Teeth**

*BLDHD 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 to help raise awareness and reinforce the importance of children's oral health. Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department (BLDHD) together with the Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance (NMPHA) would like to emphasize the importance of healthy dental habits that start at a young age.

"Attitudes and habits established at an early age are critical in maintaining good oral health throughout life," says Dr. Joshua Meyerson, Medical Director. "By participating in National Children's Dental Health Month, parents, caregivers, teachers, members of the dental community, and anyone involved in a child's life can help keep their smiles beautiful now and for years to come."

#### 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 a fluoridated toothpaste to prevent cavities, according to the American Dental Association (ADA). Children under 3 should use just a smear of toothpaste the amount of a grain of rice, older children need just a pea sized amount. 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 formula is 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 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 Sugars:** Limit 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, starting at age 1, 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.

The Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department is actively supporting National Children's Dental Health Month by promoting oral health education and providing resources to families. Our health department partners with the Health Department of Northwest Michigan offer oral health screenings to children entering kindergarten through Michigan's Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment Program (KOHA). Additionally, the health department's Community Connections program is available to assist families who need help finding or paying for a dentist, ensuring that all children have access to necessary oral health care.

To encourage healthy dental habits for your child, click [here](#) to download the ADA's 2025 Brushing Calendar. For more information on National Children's Dental Health Month, click [here](#).

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