

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **February Designated as Children's Dental Health Month**

BISMARCK, N.D. – According to the North Dakota Department of Health's Oral Health Program, February has been designated nationally as Children's Dental Health Month. Sponsored by the American Dental Association, the month-long health observance brings together dental professionals, health care providers, and educators to promote the benefits of good oral health to children, their caregivers, teachers, and many others.

“Good oral health is necessary for good overall health,” said Kimberlie Yineman, director of the North Dakota Department of Health's Oral Health Program. Tooth decay (cavities) is one of the most common chronic conditions of childhood in the United States. Untreated tooth decay can cause pain and infections that may lead to problems with eating, speaking, playing and learning. Parents and caregivers should help children develop good oral health habits early in life to ensure they have a healthy mouth.

“In North Dakota, 73 percent of children in the third grade have experienced tooth decay,” said Yineman. “We want to encourage everyone to help children maintain good dental health habits so they can be free from pain and keep a healthy smile.”

Talk to your dentist about fluoride varnish and sealants for your child.

- Fluoride varnish is a protective coating that is painted on teeth to help prevent cavities and to help slow or stop cavities that have just started.
- Sealants prevent cavities by creating a barrier between the teeth and cavity-causing bacteria. Sealants also stop cavities from growing and can prevent the need for fillings.

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To properly care for your dental health:

- Schedule regular dental check-ups and cleanings
- Brush your teeth at least two times a day with fluoridated toothpaste
- Floss your teeth daily
- Eat a balanced diet and limit sugary drinks and snacks
- Avoid tobacco use
- Replace your toothbrush every three to four months and after an illness

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