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Childhood cavities should be a thing of the past

NEWS RELEASE

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MENOMINEE—While progress has been made in recent decades in the effort to eliminate childhood tooth decay, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that one in five children in America still have untreated cavities.

February is National Children’s Dental Health Month, an annual campaign by the American Dental Association that seeks to raise awareness of the importance of children’s oral health.

“Tooth decay and other oral diseases cause pain and infections, and can lead to problems with eating, speaking, playing and learning,” said Dr. Brian Carmody, a dentist at the Northern Menominee Health Center South in Menominee. “The prevalence of tooth decay in our children is unnecessary; it can and should be avoided.”

The good news, Dr. Carmody said, is that “through good oral care habits, regular use of fluoride, and by applying dental sealants, we have the potential to nearly eliminate tooth decay in school-age children.”

To protect children’s oral health, the dentist advises parents and guardians to do the following:

1. Have children brush their teeth twice a day, and don’t forget the floss. For children under the age of eight, an adult should brush the child’s teeth or supervise to make sure it’s done thoroughly.
2. Protect your child's teeth with fluoride.
 - a. Use fluoride toothpaste. If your child is less than seven years old, put only a pea-sized amount on their toothbrush.

- b. If your drinking water is not fluoridated, talk to a dentist or physician about the best way to protect your child's teeth.
3. Encourage children to eat regular nutritious meals and avoid frequent between-meal snacking.
4. Have your children visit the dentist regularly (once every six months).
5. Talk to your child's dentist about dental sealants.
6. If you are pregnant, get prenatal care and eat a healthy diet. The diet should include folic acid to prevent birth defects of the brain and spinal cord and possibly cleft lip/palate.

“With the preventive tools and knowledge we have available today, childhood cavities and other oral problems can and should become a thing of the past,” Dr. Carmody said.

For more information about children’s oral health, including fun and educational materials for children, visit the American Dental Association website at www.ada.org/ncdhm.

(The Northern Menominee Health Center South is a part of the federally qualified health center known as the U.P. Association of Rural Health Services, Inc. For more information about the association visit www.upruralhealth.org.)