

School Newsletter Winter 2007



National Children's Dental Health Month is February

Melanie Sheils-Vergeldt DDS and the School Dentist Program is celebrating National Children's Dental Health Month by participating in the Michigan Dental Association's Give Kids a Smile Day in February. Dentists throughout the state will be providing oral health screenings and education. You can also celebrate **National Children's Dental Health Month** in your classroom. We have provided some suggestions that you can do with your students to get them excited about dental health and start them on the road to healthy smiles.

- **Eggs-periment**

Demonstrate tooth decay by placing a hard-boiled egg in a cup containing white vinegar, a cola drink or apple juice. In minutes, the shell of the egg, like tooth enamel, will begin to dissolve from the acid of the vinegar.

- **Apple Decay**

Bruise an apple and let it set overnight. Cut through the bruise the next day to show that the brown area of the apple is like tooth decay. You can't always tell from looking at the outside that the tooth or apple is decayed.

- **Michigan Dental Association Coloring Contest**

The Michigan Dental Association is sponsoring the 14th Annual National Children's Dental Health Month Coloring Contest. Children in grades kindergarten through sixth are eligible for the contest. Every participant will receive a postcard thanking him or her for entering. First and second place prizes will be awarded in each grade. First place winners will receive a \$100 U.S. Savings Bond and a prize bag. Second place winners will receive a \$50 U.S. Savings Bond and a prize bag. Entries must be received by March 9, 2007 and winners will be notified in April.

Children are encouraged to be creative by using crayons, pencils, markers, beads, or even paint to color the special coloring sheet. Visit the Michigan Dental Association's website at www.smilemichigan.com for a copy of the coloring contest picture and entry form.

Healthy Snacks

Snacks and desserts can be part of a healthy diet. Moderation is the key. Mix in healthy snacks along with sweet treats, like pretzels, vegetables and dip, yogurt or milk – for dunking cookies.

The real trick is to avoid the worst offenders, especially the sticky, chewy, hard and crunchy treats. These sticky soft candies stick to the teeth and give the decay-causing bacteria and plaque more time to work on your teeth. Hard candies like

jawbreakers and suckers tend to dissolve slowly in the mouth and coat the teeth with sugar over a long period of time. Hard candies can also chip the teeth and cause choking, so it's best to keep them away from younger children.

It is important to teach kids to eat in moderation and to make sure they take proper care of their teeth. It's a good idea to drink water or milk after eating sweets. These drinks will help to rinse sugar away from the teeth until there is time for proper brushing and flossing

The Michigan Dental Association also offers the following healthy snack tips:

- Offer candy as a substitute for dessert after lunch and dinner or a few pieces along with a healthy snack.
- Model healthy habits to your children by practicing restraint when dipping into the candy jar yourself.
- Offer sugar-free gum with the artificial sweeteners, sorbitol and xylitol, which has been shown to reduce cavities. The chewing action stimulates the flow of saliva, which helps to clean the teeth.
- Make sure your children brush their teeth after enjoying sweet treats.

Children Need Healthy Teeth to Eat, Talk and Smile!

- Visit a dentist for regular check-ups. Don't wait until it hurts – dental problems can be prevented. Tooth decay is an infection that can affect a child's overall health and well-being and their ability to learn and be successful at school.
- Regular dental visits including exams, cleanings, fluoride treatments and sealants are important to keep teeth healthy. Call The School Dentist Program at 248-646-1381 to schedule your next visit.
- Brush and floss teeth daily to remove food and germs. Use fluoride toothpaste but only a pea-sized drop for young children. Toothpaste should not be swallowed.
- Have dental sealants placed on permanent molar teeth soon after they come in – usually around 6 years and 12 years.
- Eat healthy foods and snacks. Limit consumption of juices, soda pops and sport drinks which put many children and adolescents at risk for dental caries.