



Health Happenings

March 2011

(A Monthly Newsletter by RN, CYSS Nurse)

Although February is generally thought of as "Dental Health Month", I am known for being "a day late and a dollar short" most of the time! Here it is March, and I'm pleased to let you know a few of our pre-K kids were able to participate in this past month's American Dental Association's Give Kids a Smile Day. Later this month, dentist Dr. Kirk Hansen and his crew of volunteer dentists will visit our CDCs and give "flashlight dental screenings" to our children ages 3 on up. They will provide an age-appropriate talk about how, when and why we do proper oral hygiene, and then look into their little mouths to assess individual oral health. Look for information coming home soon to announce this fantastic opportunity! Look also for a report of your child's screening upon completion.

Speaking of dental health, did you know that the state of one's mouth often can provide information about their overall health? Periodontal (gum) disease has long been linked as a potential risk factor for various medical conditions, including heart disease. So, passing along good oral health habits to your child is one of the most important lessons you can teach them! Some of these habits include teaching them the correct way to brush and floss their teeth, limit their between-meal snacks and making sure they visit a dentist regularly. Brushing is encouraged at least twice daily and dental visits are recommended to begin by age two. In our CDCs, we look for your child's teeth to erupt in order to assign them a toothbrush. Designated time and oversight is provided by our providers to ensure the proper modeling of tooth brushing skills.

The latest studies in dental health center around the civic debate over fluoride levels in America's tap water. Too high of a level of fluoride can be risky, especially in children. These findings have led to an increased emphasis in using rinses and toothpaste made with xylitol. Yes, xylitol,- the product found in sugar free chewing gum! Xylitol stops oral bacteria from emitting acid that causes tooth decay and also makes it difficult for the bacteria to adhere to tooth surfaces. Some articles suggest that many pediatric dentists actually recommend children chewing gum containing xylitol to help prevent tooth decay! (What a paradigm shift!)

So, if you want your child to have good oral health, make sure a tooth brushing regime is in place, monitor their diet, and get them to their regular dentist appointments. Oh,- and buy that pack of sugar free gum the next time you're waiting at the checkout counter!