

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Information**     **Advisory**     **Warning**     **Update**

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### **FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Jennifer Michaluk, M.ED, CHES  
Director of Health Education & Planning  
(810) 987-5300 ext. 1414  
[jmichaluk@stclaircounty.org](mailto:jmichaluk@stclaircounty.org)

### **February is Children’s Dental Health Month – Choose Water for a Sparkling Smile!**

The St. Clair County Health Department in conjunction with My Community Dental Centers and local dentists reminds you to give your child a smile that lasts a lifetime. February is National Children’s Dental Health Month, which brings an increased focus on the importance of regular dental check-ups and a balanced diet. The theme of this year’s campaign “Choose Water for a Sparkling Smile” urges children to choose water, when possible, to quench their thirst and avoid drinks with added sugar like soda and sweetened juices. Also to maintain good oral health by brushing, flossing, rinsing, and eating healthy snacks.

“Children’s teeth are meant to last a lifetime, and a healthy smile is important to a child’s self-esteem” said Dr. Annette Mercatante, Medical Health Officer. “Good health habits should begin with an introductory visit to the dentist after their first tooth erupts or before your child’s first birthday. This will help to make sure your child has a sparkling smile. A balanced diet, limited snacks, daily brushing and flossing and regular check-ups are the keys to healthy teeth and gums.” Additionally, bottles and pacifiers also impact your child’s oral health. Here are some tips from the American Dental Association to keep your young child’s mouth healthy:

- Place only formula, milk or breast milk in bottles. Avoid filling the bottle with liquids such as sugar water, juice or soft drinks.
- Infants should finish their bedtime and naptime bottles before going to bed.
- If your child uses a pacifier, provide one that is clean—don’t dip it in sugar or honey, or put it in your mouth before giving it to the child.
- Encourage children to drink from a cup by their first birthday and discourage frequent or prolonged use of sippy cups.
- Serve nutritious snacks and limit sweets to mealtimes.

Older children should follow the same rules of regular brushing, flossing, dental visits and eating a balanced diet, and choosing water instead of sugary beverages like juice and soft drinks. Sugars and starches

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encourage the production of plaque which can attack tooth enamel. Also, it's not just the sugar in soft drinks that decays teeth; it's the acid too, making this double trouble.

The Lonnie J. Stevens Community Dental Clinic located in Port Huron, operated by My Community Dental Centers on behalf of St. Clair County Health Department, focuses on serving persons enrolled in Medicaid, including Healthy Kids and MiChild, the Healthy Michigan Plan, low-income uninsured and also persons with private insurance. Our center is accepting new patients and encourages dental visits by age one. This creates a positive experience and establishes a dental home before problems arise. For more information or to schedule an appointment please call 1-877-313-6232.

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