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CHI St. Joseph Children's Health Dental Center Top Tips for National Children's Dental Health Month

February is National Children's Dental Health Month

LANCASTER, Pa.- National Children's Dental Health Month is observed each year in February to promote the benefits of good oral health and regular dental check-ups for children. CHI St. Joseph Children's Health Dental Center's experts know the best dental health habits begin with proactive parents before a child's first tooth emerges.

"Parents can start great dental health habits early by simply wiping their baby's gums after each feeding with clean gauze or a washcloth," said Dr. Kyra Schirk of the CHI St. Joseph Children's Health Dental Center in Columbia, Pennsylvania. "We recommend your child's first dental visit is scheduled as soon as their first tooth emerges or by age one."

Caring for your child's teeth early will encourage healthy habits that they will carry with them for a lifetime. This care will also prevent gum disease and tooth decay, also known as gingivitis and cavities, that may cause other complications in the future.

In honor of National Children's Dental Health Month, Dr. Schirk is offering the following tips for putting your child on track to excellent oral health:

1. **Dental visits should start before your child turns one** and the earlier they begin seeing a dentist, the more comfortable they will become with exams throughout their life. If you are afraid of the dentist, be careful not to express that fear to your child. Sharing books or videos can also help ease the anxiety.
2. **"Two" is the number to remember when it comes to healthy teeth.** Your child should brush their teeth twice a day for two minutes each time and should begin flossing as soon as they develop two teeth that touch. Since two minutes can be a long time for your child, Dr. Schirk recommends using a timer or a special children's toothbrush that may play a song while they brush. To make sure good brushing habits are formed, supervise your child's brushing until around age 8.
3. **Healthy snacks are not only good for maintaining a healthy weight, but healthy teeth as well.** Snacks that are low in sugar and high in nutrients like string cheese, yogurt and cut fruits or vegetables are perfect for children as their bodies and teeth grow and mature.



4. **Talk to your dentist about your child's fluoride needs.** Fluoride helps to strengthen the tooth enamel to help prevent cavities. Cavities, when left untreated, can lead to toothaches, infections and possible premature loss of the teeth. Fluoride can be found in your local water supply, in some bottled waters and also by prescription when there is no water fluoridation in your area. Consult your child's dentist for the recommended amounts specific to your child.

5. **Baby teeth, while wiggly and bothersome, should fall out naturally and on their own.** An apple is a great tool for removing a bothersome tooth, especially if the child feels it needs to be removed sooner rather than later. Contact your child's dental care provider about any uncertainty or excessive pain.

A part of Catholic Health Initiatives, CHI St. Joseph Children's Health was formed in 2000 as the nationwide Catholic healthcare system transitioned its local purpose from the provision of acute care (through the former St. Joseph Hospital) to development and implementation of community-based programs and services designed to improve the health of the Lancaster, Pennsylvania community. Since 2004, the nonprofit has focused its programming and resources on efforts to improve the health and well-being of children.

CHI St. Joseph Children's Health offers a Dental Center at 401 Locust Street in Columbia, Pennsylvania. A second Dental Center and a Behavioral Health Center will open in Lancaster in 2017. While no insurance is required to receive services at any of these locations, CHIP, Medicaid and private insurance plans are accepted. CHI St. Joseph Children's Health provides services for children in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania regardless of insurance or ability to pay.

Interested families should call 717-397-7625 for more information about CHI St. Joseph Children's Health or visit www.CHlstjosephchildrenshealth.org.

About CHI St. Joseph Children's Health

A part of Catholic Health Initiatives, CHI St. Joseph Children's Health is a community-based organization dedicated to the health and wellbeing of children in Lancaster County. The organization works in collaboration with community partners to assure access to appropriate, quality health services for every child in the Lancaster community. This mission in children's health began with the development of Brush.Brush.Smile!®, a mobile dental clinic program, and now includes multiple efforts, programs and services committed to improving the health of children and expanding healthcare access for children and families throughout the Lancaster community. The CHI St. Joseph Children's Health Dental Center is located at 401 Locust Street in Columbia and serves as a dental home for children throughout Lancaster County in Pennsylvania. CHIP, Medicaid and private insurance are accepted but no insurance is required to receive service. Interested families should call 844-836-8871 for more information about CHI St. Joseph Children's Health Dental Center or visit www.CHIDentalCenter.org.

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