



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**HELPING BUTTE COUNTY CHILDREN HAVE HEALTHY, HAPPY SMILES**

Butte County, CA. - Taking care of your child's teeth should begin before your baby is born. Your dental health affects your baby. When you become pregnant it is recommended you visit a dentist early in your pregnancy to identify and treat existing dental problems. If you have periodontal (gum) disease your baby could be born too early or at a low birth weight.

- ❖ Parents can pass the germs that cause tooth decay from their mouth to their child's mouth. Don't put anything in your baby's mouth if it has been in your mouth. Don't share spoons, cups, toothbrushes, etc.
- ❖ Act as a good role model by brushing and flossing your teeth and gums daily with a fluoride toothpaste. By lowering the level of germs in your mouth, you can help your children have healthy teeth.
- ❖ Eat smart for healthy teeth. Your child's baby teeth are already forming in the womb, so get plenty of calcium. Rinse your mouth with water after meals and snacking.
- ❖ Select snacks low in sugar: cheese, low fat milk, dried meat stick, salad, nuts, seeds, plain yogurt, vegetables and popcorn.
- ❖ Chew xylitol gum or mints to help reduce the number of bacteria in your mouth and help prevent the spread of bacteria.

After your baby is born, it is important to learn how to keep your child's teeth healthy. Healthy teeth are key to a healthy childhood. Children need healthy teeth for chewing, speaking clearly, holding space for permanent teeth, self-esteem and looking good. Butte County Children and Families Commission recognizes the importance of oral health and encourages parents and caregivers to help take care of a child's smile by promoting good eating habits and dental care from the start.

- ❖ Check your baby's teeth. "Lift the baby's lip" to check for spots or stains on the teeth. Healthy teeth should be all one color.
- ❖ Clean your baby's teeth and gums with a clean, soft cloth or a baby's toothbrush at least once a day. Children need help cleaning their teeth until they learn to do it themselves, typically around 6-8 years of age.
- ❖ Prevent baby bottle tooth decay. Don't put your baby to bed with a bottle at night or naptime. If you do put your baby to bed with a bottle, fill it only with water.

*(more)*

## *Healthy, Happy Smiles*

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At 6 months of age, begin to teach your child to drink from a cup instead of a bottle.

- ❖ Give your child milk and water instead of soda or juice. Milk contains calcium that makes their teeth and bones strong. After 6 months of age, one small serving of juice a day is enough.
- ❖ Take your child to the dentist by age one. Children should have regular dental check-ups every 6-12 months.
- ❖ Use toothpaste with fluoride in it. Ask your dentist or doctor about fluoride products such as fluoride drops or varnish that may benefit your child's teeth.
- ❖ Give your child healthy snacks such as apples, bananas, or carrots instead of sugary (candy) or starchy (chips, crackers) foods. Limit the number of times (frequency) your child snacks each day.

In addition to providing helpful tips, Butte County Children and Families Commission is focused on increasing access to needed dental treatment for families with children ages 0 to 5. Available Commission-funded services include dental screenings at preschools, oral health education programs and individual family case management services. Case management services may include linking the child to a dental provider, translation services, assistance with dental insurance or payment resources as eligibility allows, education and more.

As part of a larger community dental collaborative, Butte County Children and Families Commission works together with community members and organizations, as well as Head Start staff, school nurses, public health staff, WIC staff and dental providers, to explore innovative ways of increasing access to oral health services for underserved children throughout the county.

For more information about the collaborative and other oral health efforts being led by Butte County Children and Families Commission, please visit their Web site at [www.buttecounty.net/bccfc](http://www.buttecounty.net/bccfc) or call (530) 538-7964.

The Butte County Children & Families Commission was established following a voter-passed initiative in November 1998 and uses tobacco tax revenue to fund education, health, child abuse prevention, child care and other programs intended to promote early childhood development for expectant parents and children through age 5. For more information about local programs improving the lives of children and families in Butte County, please contact First 5 at: (530) 538-7964 or visit us on the Web at: [www.buttecounty.net/bccfc](http://www.buttecounty.net/bccfc).

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