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# NEWS

SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS – COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 3, 2015

**Contact:**

Brittany Clampitt  
Kristi Zukovich  
316-660-9370

**PRACTICE GOOD ORAL HEALTH EARLY**

(Sedgwick County, Kan.) – Tooth decay is the single most prevalent disease in children. It not only causes pain in the mouth, it can lead to poor overall health and even learning problems.

In 2014 the Sedgwick County Health Department Children's Dental Clinic provided free preventive and restorative services to 354 uninsured, low-income children. The clinic also provided school screenings to more than 20,000 children in Sedgwick County schools, and identified 892 children who had emergency needs.

February is Children's Dental Health Month, which serves as a reminder to prevent dental caries by practicing good oral health early – even before babies get teeth – and continuing to do so throughout adulthood. Primary, or "baby," teeth help children speak clearly and chew naturally, as well as aid in forming a path that permanent teeth can follow. These practices will help ensure proper oral health for children:

- Clean babies' gums with a soft infant toothbrush or cloth and water.
- Avoid nursing babies to sleep and put only water in a bedtime bottle.
- Visit a pediatric dentist by a baby's first birthday and twice a year every year following.
- Floss and brush primary, or "baby," teeth twice daily using fluoridated toothpaste and a soft, small toothbrush.
- Most children may begin flossing and brushing their own teeth, while supervised, when they can tie their shoes.
- Serve children fruits and vegetables. You've heard it before, but proper nutrition is good for children's bodies AND their oral health.
- Stop the pop! Soda, and even too much juice, can lead to dental caries. If children occasionally drink these beverages or eat sugary foods, they should brush their teeth immediately after.

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The Children's Dental Clinic is operated by one dental assistant and two hygienists who work in concert with school nurses to identify children in need of and eligible for services. Twenty-five dentists and oral surgeons, and Wichita State University dental hygiene students volunteer their services, without which thousands of children in our community would not receive oral health care.

This year, health department staff members are once again available to provide free presentations focusing on the importance of good oral health and demonstrating tooth flossing/brushing techniques. Children who receive this information also will receive a free oral health kit, including a toothbrush, toothpaste and floss. These 26,208 oral health kits were provided by the Delta Dental of Kansas Foundation.

To schedule a presentation, or for more information about the Children's Dental Clinic, call 316-660-7300 or visit the Sedgwick County Health Department online at [www.sedgwickcounty.org](http://www.sedgwickcounty.org).

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