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# NEWS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS  
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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 19, 2019

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### **February is National Children's Dental Health Month**

(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 learning problems.

In 2018, the Sedgwick County Division of Health (SCDOH) Children's Dental Clinic (CDC) provided free preventive and restorative services to 320 uninsured, low-income children. The clinic also provided school screenings to more than 18,862 children in Sedgwick County schools, and identified 771 children who had emergency needs.

February is National Children's Dental Health Month, which serves as a reminder to prevent dental cavities 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, along with following this year's slogan of "Brush and clean in between to build a healthy smile," 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. Proper nutrition is good for children's bodies and their oral health.
- Sip all day and get decay! The mouth becomes acidic for 20 to 30 minutes after eating and drinking anything other than water. Immediately rinse with water after consuming sugary foods and drinks to help the body neutralize the acid more quickly and reduce the risk of decay.

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The CDC 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.

“Children’s teeth are meant to last a lifetime, and a healthy smile is important to a child’s self-esteem. With proper care, a healthy diet and regular dental visits, their teeth can remain healthy and strong,” said Adrienne Byrne, Sedgwick County Division of Health Director.

This year, SCDOH CDC 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 10,000 oral health kits were provided by the Delta Dental of Kansas Foundation.

To schedule a presentation, or for more information about the CDC, call (316) 660-7300 or visit the SCDOH online at [www.sedgwickcounty.org](http://www.sedgwickcounty.org).

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