



O R A L H E A L T H K A N S A S



Each February, the American Dental Association (ADA) sponsors National Children's Dental Health Month to raise awareness about the importance of oral health. This message is essential to the health and wellbeing of all children, starting at birth and continuing on through high school. When children's oral health suffers, so does their ability to learn.

Very young children need to develop daily dental hygiene and "teeth healthy" eating habits. This is the responsibility of families, child care providers, early childhood educators, school nurses, and special education professionals. Children's physicians and nurses also have a role to play by making sure children at risk for dental decay are receiving fluoride varnish treatments and by screening the child for signs of tooth decay. Children need to see a dental professional by age one to make sure that the child's first teeth are coming in correctly and to educate families about how to keep their children cavity-free for life.

Students need to learn about the science behind oral disease and how to have a healthy mouth for a lifetime. They benefit from learning about the science underlying tooth development as well as the harm to their mouths that comes from smoking, chewing tobacco, mouth piercings, illegal drug use and playing sports without a mouth guard.

Oral disease is unsightly, costly, and at times life-threatening. Too many Kansas children end up in surgery as a result of dental decay, at a cost that can top \$20,000.00. If tooth decay and gum disease are addressed in the early stages, treatment is relatively quick, painless and inexpensive.

To learn more and to find classroom activities for Children's Dental Health Month, visit the following websites:

- <http://www.ada.org/public/events/ncdhm/index.asp>
- <http://fha.maryland.gov/oralhealth/cohm.cfm>
- <http://healthyteeth.org>
- <http://www.kdheks.gov/ohi/>

