



# PLAINVILLE-SOUTHINGTON REGIONAL HEALTH DISTRICT

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## **Build a Healthy Smile**

*PSHD Celebrates National Children's Dental Health Month*

Developing good oral hygiene habits at an early age is very important. That is why the Plainville Southington Regional Health District (PSHD) is working with the American Dental Association to promote National Children's Dental Health Month this February. This month long national health observance brings together thousands of dedicated professionals, healthcare providers, and educators to promote the benefits of good oral health to children, their caregivers, and teachers. This year's theme is "Brush and clean in between to build a healthy smile." The focus of this campaign is to promote awareness about the importance of brushing your teeth at an early age.

Dr. Stephanie A. Urillo, Chairwoman of the Plainville Southington Regional Health District, and a practicing general dentist in Southington echoes this sentiment. Good daily dental hygiene can and should begin prior to the child being able to walk. Bacteria begin to colonize in the mouth very early on. Good daily dental hygiene not only cleans the teeth but decreases the bacterial population in the mouth, decreasing the likelihood that decay will start. Of equal importance is that of good diet. Children should NOT drink soda and other sugary drinks and should not eat sugary foods. Never put a child

to sleep with a bottle full of milk or juice. This is the causative agent of nursing bottle caries. Baby teeth are placeholders for the permanent teeth. Should baby teeth be lost early, impaction of the permanent teeth can result.

In short, good daily hygiene aids children and adults in keeping the mouth healthy. The mouth is, after all the gateway to the body! For a reference on exercises for children to learn how to keep their mouth healthy at all ages, kindly reference the Connecticut State Dental Association website. Go to the tab “for the public.” Under the dropdown, go to classroom resources. This also is a very useful aid for teachers who wish to use these models as templates for classroom exercises. This teaching aid was updated in 2017 and was chaired by Dr. Urillo for the Connecticut State Dental Association.

Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease in children. There are safe and effective preventive measures that can protect teeth. Good oral hygiene practices such as thorough brushing with a fluoride toothpaste can help keep children from getting cavities. Tooth decay is almost entirely preventable if good brushing methods are developed early.

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) recommends that a child go to the dentist by age 1 or within six months after the first tooth erupts. Protecting your babies’ teeth at an early age can prevent dental problems in the future. For a healthy mouth and smile, the ADA recommends:

- Brush your teeth at least twice a day with a soft-bristled brush. The size and shape of your brush should fit your mouth allowing you to reach all areas easily.
- Replace your toothbrush every three or four months, or sooner if the bristles are frayed.
- Use fluoride toothpaste.
- Floss your teeth daily.
- Eat a balanced diet that limits sugary snacks and beverages.
- Visit your dentist at least twice a year.

To learn more about oral health visit the Connecticut Department of Public Health website at <https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Oral-Health/oral-health/Office-of-Oral-Health>.

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The mission of the Plainville Southington Health District is to preserve, protect, promote, and improve the quality of life in a healthy environment through the prevention of disease, ongoing health education opportunities and the enhancement of the well-being of its residents.