



# Dickinson-Iron District Health Department

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Dickinson-Iron District Health Department Supports Healthy Baby Teeth

Kingsford and Iron River, MI, June 4, 2015 - **FACT or FICTION?....**Baby teeth don't need to be brushed or taken care of because they fall out anyway to make room for the adult teeth? **"FICTION!"**

Many parents are not aware that baby (deciduous) teeth are just as important as adult (permanent) teeth and there are lots of reasons why. Says Joyce Ziegler, Community Services Director, "Children need baby teeth to be able to chew and swallow food properly so healthy baby teeth are tied to getting the nutrition needed for good growth and development. It is hard to chew food when your teeth hurt, have decay (cavities), or are broken." She also notes that children need their baby teeth to learn how to speak properly.

In addition, baby teeth help to hold space in the jaws for the adult teeth to emerge when the timing is right. If baby teeth are lost early, the teeth that are still present will drift to the middle of the mouth, leaving little room and causing crowding of the adult teeth.

Dr. Terry Frankovich, pediatrician and local public health medical director reminds parents that "Decaying and broken teeth can lead to serious infections in the mouth and in the soft tissues surrounding the mouth such as the cheek. These infections require antibiotics and can cause more serious complications, so good prevention is key."

Finally, baby teeth give each child's face shape and a great smile makes them feel good about themselves which helps as they are learning how to make friends and become independent. These skills are important for a lifetime!

Your child's teeth and smile are important now and later in life. Baby teeth should be brushed twice a day with a pea-size amount of fluoridated toothpaste. Even before the baby teeth erupt into the mouth, your baby's gums can be massaged with a damp washcloth after each feeding also. This keeps the mouth clean and also helps your baby get used to someone cleaning their mouth.

"Other parent tips for healthy baby teeth," says Ziegler, "include not sharing utensils or cups with our kids as infants and toddlers so we do not pass on tooth decay germs, talking with your dentist or pediatrician about the right amount of fluoride for your child and visiting the dentist at or by one year of age."

The U.P. Wide Smiles Oral Health Initiative, along with the Health Department and the Superior Health Foundation, encourage parents to safeguard their child's smile with good and early attention to their teeth...even the baby ones!

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