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**Health Department of Northwest Michigan**

### **Teaching the Youth**

#### *Promoting Healthy Habits During Children's Dental Health Month*

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan (HDNW) is taking part in National Children's Dental Health Month by distributing about 2,000 toothbrush kits to children and providing information on how they can keep their teeth and gums healthy. Each kit has a toothbrush, toothpaste, and dental floss. The kits will be distributed by HDNW staff who will be using the agency's "Re-Think the Drink" display as part of the oral health education presentation.

For February 2023, Children's Dental Health Month is promoting the basics: "Brush your teeth with fluoride toothpaste and clean between your teeth for a healthy smile." The month-long event, sponsored by the American Dental Association (ADA), empowers children to protect those pearly whites and practice effective dental hygiene.

"Teaching dental health isn't as daunting as it may sound. We consider it an extension of hygiene, such as handwashing," says Dawn Marie Strehl, HDNW Regional Oral Health Coordinator, Registered Dental Hygienist.

The following information is being shared with students:

- Learn about our teeth and how they work.
- Brush our teeth twice a day.
- See the benefits of healthy eating habits and how sugary foods can damage our teeth.
- Encourage positive choices, such as drinking water instead of juice or soda.
- Learn about oral health professionals and how they work to keep our teeth healthy.

Classroom gatherings are taking place throughout February at schools in Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties.

### **Add in Dental Sealants**

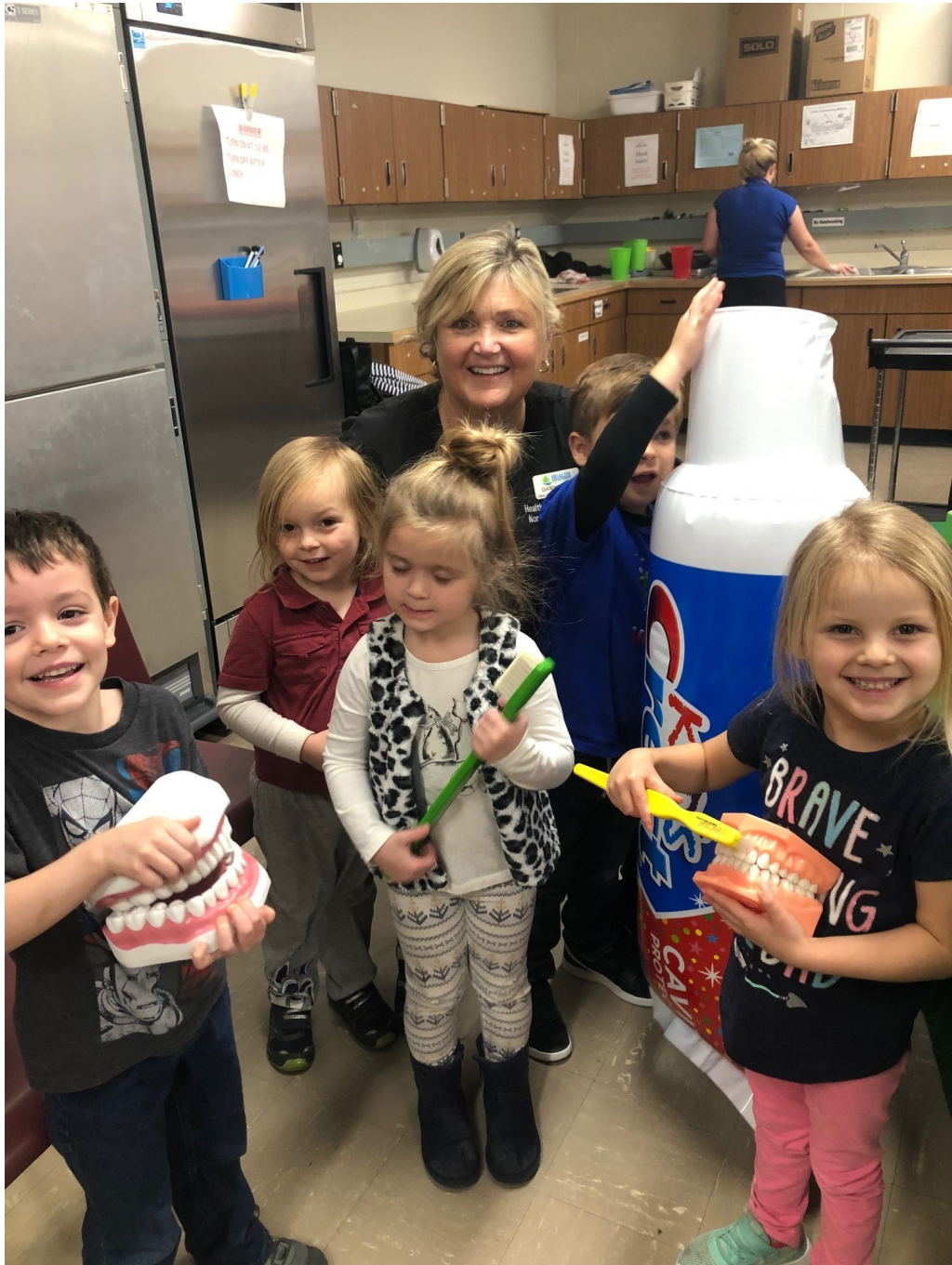
Rounding out healthy at-home care, dental sealants can help protect children's teeth and save money. Sealants form a protective barrier that helps prevent bacteria from causing tooth decay. Strehl and a team of dental professionals have, and continue to, offer free sealants through the schools.

For coloring and activity sheets, and free posters for children, [click here](#). To learn more about sealants and how they are offered, call 800-432-4121 and follow HDNW on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.

**Cutline:** HDNW Regional Oral Health Educator Dawn Marie Strehl uses fun tools while teaching these preschoolers about how to care for their teeth and gums.

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*The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties. For more information, visit [nwhealth.org](http://nwhealth.org).*





## Healthy Smile Tips



Brush your teeth 2x/day  
with fluoride toothpaste.



Clean between your  
teeth daily.



Eat healthy foods and limit  
sugary beverages.



See your dentist at least  
twice a year.

ADA American Dental Association®