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## Licking County Health Department

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News Release

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Subject: National Children's Dental Health Month

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

Licking County, OH – “Each February the American Dental Association (ADA) sponsors National Children's Dental Health Month to raise awareness about the importance of dental health”, said Joe Ebel, Licking County Health Commissioner. “This is a good time to make sure your kids have regular checkups and are brushing two to three times each day.”

Children should be seen by a dentist beginning as soon as their first tooth erupts, or at least by their first birthday. This allows the dentist an opportunity to spot the beginnings of tooth decay and teach parents how to care for their child's teeth. A child's first teeth can be cleaned by gently rubbing them with damp gauze. When the first molars come in, usually by age 10 months, it's time to start daily brushing.

The ADA recommends using a soft-bristled brush and water. The brush should be moved back and forth gently using short strokes, making sure the front, back, and chewing surfaces of all teeth are reached. Be extra careful around the child's tender gums. Fluoride toothpaste is not recommended by the ADA until the child is two to three years old. When the child is old enough, only a pea-sized amount should be used. Do not allow the child to swallow the toothpaste. When choosing toothpaste, check the label – some are not recommended for a child under six years of age.

A parent needs to brush and floss the child's teeth until the child can do it independently. Children need flossing as soon as they have two teeth that touch together. After brushing, wrap a length of floss around two of fingers and guide it between the teeth using a gentle, rubbing motion. Slide the floss up and down along the side of each tooth, and clean the gumline by carefully sliding the floss under the gum in the space between the gum and the tooth.

Avoid sweet, starchy or extra sticky snacks. Encourage your child to eat raw fruits and vegetables whenever possible. Do not put a child to bed with a bottle and do not allow a child to spend hours sipping sweet liquids and even milk.

For more information visit [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org) or call the Licking County Health Department at (740) 349-6535.

