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## FEBRUARY IS NATIONAL CHILDREN'S DENTAL HEALTH MONTH

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**Sanford, Fla.** – The Florida Department of Health in Seminole County (DOH-Seminole) encourages parents and caregivers to teach children proper oral care at a young age to reduce risk of getting cavities. February is National Children's Dental Health Month, an important time to promote the benefits of good oral health to children. "Sugar Wars" is the theme for this year's awareness month, sponsored by the American Dental Association. The theme highlights the harmful role sugar has on teeth.

In observance of National Children's Dental Health Month, DOH-Seminole's Dental Care Program will offer free services to Seminole County school children ages five to 13 during the month of February. Services include exams, x-rays, cleanings, fluoride, and oral hygiene instructions. Appointments are available every Thursday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Sanford Health Office, 400 West Airport Boulevard. Call 407-665-3602 for more information or to register. Same-day appointments and walk-ins are not available.

"The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that more than 51 million school hours are lost each year because of dental-related health problems, making it the number one reason for missed school," said Dr. Norma Barinas, Dentist for DOH-Seminole.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), cavities are one of the most common chronic conditions of childhood in the United States. Untreated cavities can cause pain and infections that may lead to problems with eating, speaking, playing, and learning. Twenty percent of children aged five to 11 years have at least one untreated cavity compared to 13 percent of adolescents aged 12 to 19 years. The percentage of children and adolescents aged five to 19 years with untreated cavities is twice as high for those from low-income families (25 percent) compared with children from higher-income households (11 percent).

"Cavities are preventable," said Dr. Swannie Jett, Health Officer for DOH-Seminole. "Fluoride varnish, a high concentration fluoride coating that is painted on teeth can prevent about 33 percent of cavities in the primary (baby) teeth. Children living in communities with fluoridated tap water have fewer cavities than children who live in areas where their tap water is not fluoridated."

For more information about National Children's Dental Health Month, visit the [American Dental Association](#) website. Additional information can also be found at DOH-Seminole's website, [www.seminolecohealth.com](http://www.seminolecohealth.com).

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