



## ORAL HEALTH

February 2012



With an Improving Understanding of MCH grant, FamilyVoices IMPACT works to develop ways to improve health and wellness for all children and families, and to encourage partnerships between families and professionals for children's good health. [www.familyvoices.org](http://www.familyvoices.org) and [www.brightfuturesforfamilies.org](http://www.brightfuturesforfamilies.org). This digest is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—Health Resources and Services Administration—Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Division of Child, Adolescent, and Family Health UCMC21535.

FAMILY VOICES®

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## February is National Children's Dental Health Month!

Most people think of Valentine's Day when they think of February—love, hearts, and chocolate! The American Dental Association ([www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org)) has also chosen February as National Children's Dental Health Month.

It's not Just about Teeth!

Good oral or dental health is not just about keeping teeth cavity-free. Of course, that is important. Oral health also involves healthy gums and tongues. And while toothaches or sore gums are no fun, oral health is linked with good health overall. Good oral health includes regular brushing and flossing, and limiting sugary foods. It helps keep harmful bacteria from getting into the blood stream and causing much more serious problems. Studies show a link between oral bacteria and heart disease and clogged arteries.

To read more about the link between good overall health and oral health, go to: [www.mayoclinic.com/health/dental/DE00001](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/dental/DE00001)

## Building a Partnership with Your Child's Dentist

You, your child, and your dentist are partners in your child's oral health. Find a dentist you and your child are

comfortable with, and make sure your dentist knows of any concerns you have about your child. Perhaps your child is fearful of the dentist (or strangers in general) or your child has special health care needs. It is important—and helpful for everybody—to let your dentist and the office staff know ahead of time.

The University of Washington School of Dentistry has helpful fact sheets on many special health issues, ranging from asthma and autism to intellectual disability and traumatic brain injury. For each issue, fact sheets are available for parents and caregivers, as well as medical and dental professionals who care for children and adults. Parent fact sheets have tips for making appointments, preparing for dental health visits, and keeping teeth and gums healthy.

To see these fact sheets, go to: <http://dental.washington.edu/departments/oral-medicine/special-needs-fact-sheets.html>

