



County of Santa Cruz



HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Date: January 31, 2024

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FEBRUARY IS NATIONAL CHILDREN'S DENTAL HEALTH MONTH (CDHM)

Santa Cruz, Calif.- February 1, 2024 – Every February, the American Dental Association (ADA), observes National Children's Dental Health Month to bring together thousands of dedicated professionals, healthcare providers, and educators to promote the benefits of good oral health for children.

According to the CDC, cavities, also known as tooth decay, are the most common chronic disease in the United States during childhood. If left untreated, cavities cause pain and infections that can lead to problems with speaking, playing, eating, and learning. The good news is that tooth decay is preventable.

"Families in our community are fortunate to have such a strong network of partners focus on oral health, from Santa Cruz County's Local Oral Health Program (LOHP) to our Oral Health Access (OHA) Steering Committee. Together these 21 organizations are working to make a real impact on improving the oral health of our county residents," said Sheree Storm, Chief Strategy Officer of Dientes Community Dental Care. "Over the past eight years, our local efforts have contributed to the decrease in cavities among kinder-aged children from 24% in 2014 to 18% in 2019 while increasing dental visits for children ages 0-2 from 36% in 2015 to 57% in 2019. For more information see our [OHA Needs Assessment, 2022](#)."

Locally, Santa Cruz County will be observing CDHM through the following events:

- Salud Para La Gente is offering their free Children's Dental Care Day on Saturday, February 24th. To reserve your spot at this event or to schedule a regular appointment call or text 831-728-0222 or visit www.splg.org.

- Dientes will commemorate their 20th year providing “Give Kids a Smile” Day on Saturday, February 3rd which includes free dental exams, prevention, and treatment services for uninsured, low-income children under 18 years old. Dientes has a few spots left for this day and they are also accepting new pediatric patients under 18 years old at their main clinic on Commercial Way. To make an appointment, please call 831-464-5409 or visit <https://dientes.org/>.
- The LOHP and OHA partners are hosting a social media campaign that focuses on children’s oral health education reminders and milestones for caregivers and families the entire month of February. **Follow us on Instagram and Facebook at publichealthsc.**

Each week will consist of messages around the following themes:

- Every infant should visit the dentist by their first tooth and no later than their first birthday.
- Kinder Oral Health Assessment (KOHA) reminders for kids entering public school.
- Improving oral health access for children with school-based dental programs by Dientes Community Dental Care and Salud Para La Gente.
- Healthy habits for healthy smiles; routine oral health hygiene dental visits.

For more information about the Local Oral Health Program visit: [Healthy Smiles \(santacruzhealth.org\)](https://www.healthysmilescc.org/) or the Oral Health Access Steering Committee visit: <https://oralhealthsc.org/> or <https://www.healthysmilescc.org/>.