

## NEWS RELEASE

March 28, 2022

For Immediate Release

Contact: Sarah Minnick, Program Manager 308-345-4223 [sarah@swhealth.ne.gov](mailto:sarah@swhealth.ne.gov)

### **Polish Your Pearls Dental Program News Release**

Polish Your Pearls is a grant-based dental program from Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) that helps supplement regular dental visits to provide optimal protection against cavities for children ages 0-5. This program is available to local daycares and preschools to provide oral health screening, dental education, and application of fluoride varnish.

“According to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood illness in the United States, and the most preventable of all health problems,” states Sarah Minnick, Program Manager for SWNPHD. “Tooth decay is 5 times more common than asthma and 20 times more common than diabetes. In Nebraska 46% of children aged 3-5 already have dental decay.”

It is now recommended by AAPD that children visit their dentist no later than their first birthday and every six months after that. When children learn how to care for their teeth early in life, their families save on costs and prevent future problems. Polish Your Pearls provides education including proper brushing and flossing.

#### Proper Flossing

- Wrap the ends of an 18-to-24-inch section of floss around your middle fingers.
- Hold the floss between your thumbs and the pointer fingers. Leave 1 inch of floss between your two hands.
- Gently guide the floss between your teeth. When you reach the gum line, curve the floss into a “C” shape around the tooth. Make sure to go below the gum line too.
- Make sure to use light pressure against the teeth when working the floss up and down to better clean the teeth. Unwind to use a clean piece of floss approximately every 3 teeth.

Having your child participate in the Polish Your Pearls dental program can save money and help prevent problems. The fluoride varnish applied is a sticky, honey like material that is applied to the teeth with a small soft brush. This varnish can be applied 4-6 times per year and can decrease further cavity development by approximately 38%. All children who participate in the program will receive a free dental screening, toothbrush, and toothpaste. A note is also sent home with your child, showing the screening results. Those interested in knowing more about the program or wanting to set up a dental clinic should contact Sarah Minnick at SWNPHD at 308-345-4223.

SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th Street – one block north of Arby’s in McCook. You can also follow us on Facebook and Instagram. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties.

###