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October is National Dental Hygiene Month

Stockton, CA (October 6, 2023) – National Dental Hygiene Month is observed every October, and this month is a great time to raise awareness about the importance of oral health and to highlight the essential work that Registered Dental Hygienists (RDHs) perform. This year's theme is "Everyday Extraordinary" which celebrates RDHs who transform everyday tasks with extraordinary expertise, since they have various roles as clinicians, educators, researchers and entrepreneurs, as well as in public health, administration, and corporate settings.

According to the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), oral health is essential to general health and well-being. About 3.5 billion people are affected by oral diseases, with untreated tooth decay in adult teeth being the most common health condition. Most oral diseases are caused by common risk factors, such as consumption of sugar-sweetened foods and beverages, tobacco use, alcohol use, and poor hygiene.

An unhealthy mouth can increase your risk of cardiovascular diseases, pregnancy and birth complications, high blood pressure, and respiratory diseases. Oral health diseases are largely preventable and can be treated in the early stages to avoid tooth decay, periodontal disease, tooth loss and oral cancer.

RDHs are licensed dental professionals who work independently or alongside a dentist. They have training and experience to assess oral health and offer preventive and educational services in various settings. According to the American Dental Hygienists' Association ([ADHA](#)), RDHs provide educational, clinical, and consultative services to individuals and populations of all ages in a variety of settings. RDHs play a pivotal role in fostering patient relationships and maintaining healthy smiles.

Remember, to maintain the best oral health, do the following practices:

1. **Brush:** use fluoridated toothpaste. Fluoride is a mineral that helps protect teeth from tooth decay and cavities. It prevents decay by strengthening the tooth's hard white surface called enamel. Brush all sides of each of your teeth gently using small, circular motions. Be sure to brush twice a day for two minutes. Don't forget to brush your tongue!

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2. **Floss:** use a string of about 12-18 inches, about the length between the tips of your fingers and your elbow. Wrap it around both middle fingers and grip it between your thumb and index fingers. Ease the floss gently between your teeth until it reaches your gum and slide it up and down under your gum. Floss at least once a day for the best results.
3. **Eat healthy foods:** sugary foods cause cavities, as well as acidic drinks like carbonated beverages or orange juice. These can weaken the enamel of the tooth. Be sure to limit sugary snacks and drinks.
4. **Schedule an appointment with your dentist:** schedule regular checkups and cleanings with your dentist. Your dentist will help uncover other oral health issues you may not be aware of. Medi-Cal members under 21 can have cleanings and exams every six months, while those over 21 can have them every twelve months. If you have Medi-Cal, visit [SmileCalifornia.org](https://www.smilecalifornia.org) to learn more about your dental benefits and to find a dentist.

For more information about the LOHP, please visit www.sjteeth.org, or contact Breanna Williams, Public Health Educator at bwilliams2@sjcphs.org or (209) 468-0354.

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