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PREVENTING CAVITIES FROM THE CRADLE

Health experts urge Arizona's parents to take tots to dentist

**** MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE WITH PARENTS, DENTISTS, STATE EXPERTS ****

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PHOENIX – A visit to the dentist is often the last thing on a new parent's "to-do" list. The Arizona Department of Health Services is trying to change that.

Supported by dental and pediatric professional organizations and a groundswell of oral health experts, the ADHS 2008 "First Dental Visit by Age One" campaign stresses the importance of dental visits no later than a child's first birthday. It also reiterates to dentists the value of performing infant dental exams and establishing a dental home for children early in their lives.

"Dental visits by age one are critical because tooth decay is the most common chronic disease among children. In fact, 34% of Arizona children have experienced tooth decay by the age of three," said RaNee Tuscano, preschool prevention program manager in the ADHS Office of Oral Health. "Early intervention can prevent dental disease, reduce the cost of providing care, and eliminate pain and suffering for our children today and later in life."

Tooth decay is a highly preventable disease that is passed to infants from their parents and intimate caregivers. Parents can do simple things to help prevent oral disease, such as:

- Avoid sharing spoons, pacifiers and cups with your child, and do not clean pacifiers with your mouth.
- Practice proper brushing and flossing, limit your intake of sugar, and see a dentist regularly.
- Brush your child's teeth twice daily with a soft toothbrush and floss between them daily as soon as they touch.
- Limit your child's intake of juice as recommended by your doctor (usually ½ cup per day) and do not give your baby soda or sports drinks.
- Do not serve sugary drinks in bottles or sippy cups and avoid putting anything but water in bed-time bottles.
- Take your child to the dentist no later than the first birthday and continue visits at least once every 6 months.

Media members can use the contact information above to arrange interviews and get more information for stories and segments. The public is encouraged to call (602) 542-1867 or visit www.AZSmiles.org for more information about this campaign.