



Public Health



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# 'Little Teeth, Big Responsibility' Campaign Prioritizes Early Childhood Oral Health to Combat the Most Common Chronic Childhood Disease

*Smile SBC and First 5 San Bernardino work to raise awareness of the importance of pediatric oral health during February's National Children's Dental Health Month*

**SAN BERNARDINO, CA (February 6, 2024)** – Tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease. For the third year in a row, [Smile SBC](#) and [First 5 San Bernardino](#) are joining forces to promote healthy pediatric oral care during February's National Children's Dental Health Month. "[Little Teeth, Big Responsibility](#)" urges parents of young children to take their baby to the dentist by their first birthday or first tooth, because healthy baby teeth form healthy adult teeth.

According to a survey by the Center for Oral Health and Smile SBC, more than 60 percent of kindergarteners are experiencing tooth decay in San Bernardino County, but it can be prevented. Parents who emphasize brushing, flossing, healthy eating and regular dentist visits not only are protecting the child's overall health but are setting the tone for their child to have lifelong positive oral health habits.

"People don't think much about their baby's first teeth or worry about getting a fidgety toddler to brush, but parents of the very young should not underestimate the importance of healthy baby teeth," said First 5 San Bernardino Executive Director Karen Scott. "Parents are the ones in charge of their children's oral health, and it's never too early to start protecting their smiles. When a young child has healthy teeth and gums, it stays with them for a lifetime."

Baby teeth are temporary, but they impact future oral health. Baby teeth help children chew correctly, speak properly and form healthy adult teeth. Little Teeth, Big Responsibility provides pediatric dental health information and resources to San Bernardino County parents and caretakers with young children.

Bonnie Flippin, program coordinator of San Bernardino County Department of Public Health's local oral health program, Smile SBC, says finding a free or low-cost local dentist is easy on their "[Find a Dentist](#)" page on the SmileSBC.org website. Information about medical insurance enrollment and transportation assistance services are also available on the "Find a Dentist" page.

Visit [SmileSBC.org](#) to find a dentist near you and for more information on protecting your child's oral health. Additional campaign information, including a partner toolkit and oral health resources can be found at [First5SanBernardino.org/OralHealth](#).

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### **About Smile SBC**

The San Bernardino County Department of Public Health's Smile SBC program, established in January 2018, aims to work in alignment with and towards achieving the goals and objectives outlined in the California State Oral Health Plan 2018-2028. Smile SBC and local oral health programs like it across the state are funded by the California Department of Public Health, Office of Oral Health through funds generated as a result of passage of the California Healthcare, Research and Prevention Tobacco Tax Act of 2016 (Proposition 56). Smile SBC is tasked with improving oral health, especially of vulnerable and high-risk populations, through assessment, planning, health promotion and education, population-level disease control and prevention and capacity-building. The program also focuses on coordinating countywide efforts and building partnerships to ensure county residents have equal opportunities and resources to achieve and maintain optimal oral health. For more information, visit [SmileSBC.org](#).

### **About First 5 San Bernardino**

First 5 San Bernardino's distinct purpose is to improve the lives of young children and their families by giving them the best possible start in life. For 25 years, First 5 San Bernardino has been working dynamically through strategic partnerships to promote, support and enhance the health and early development of children prenatal through age 5, their families and communities. Funded through the 1998 voter-approved initiative, California Children and Families Act (Proposition 10 tobacco tax revenues), First 5 San Bernardino has evolved into a system where stakeholders and services are integrated, coordinated and sustainable, and one that families experience as accessible, inclusive and equitable. For more information, visit [First5SanBernardino.org](#).