



News from the Office of  
**ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARK POLONCARZ**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein**

**October 7, 2013**

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### **BURSTEIN URGES PARENTS TO BRUSH UP ON KIDS' ORAL HEALTH**

*October 7-11 is Virtual Oral Health Week; Education, Establishing Healthy Routines Recommended*

**ERIE COUNTY, NY**— Today, Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein reminded parents and caregivers of young children that “it’s never too early to start” when it comes to good oral hygiene for children, and stressed the importance of parents working with pediatricians to establish good oral health care from the first weeks of their baby’s life. As the American Academy of Pediatrics (“AAP”) and other children’s organizations have reported, tooth decay (also known as early childhood caries, or “ECC”) is the most common chronic children’s disease in the country.

“It is important that parents understand the necessity of taking care of their children’s teeth from a very early age in order to prevent dental caries and other problems from forming, and also to instill good oral hygiene habits in their children from a young age,” **said Burstein**. “Tooth decay is a disease that is largely preventable, and it is always better to get started early in developing lifelong patterns of good oral health habits.”

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (“CDC”) has stated that dental caries is five times more common than asthma and seven times more common than hay fever in children. More than 40% of children have tooth decay by the time they reach kindergarten, and children with dental caries in their baby teeth are at elevated risk for cavities in their adult teeth.

**Burstein continued**, “This week provides great opportunities for parents to learn more about ways to protect their children’s teeth as well as things to do and not to do, such as avoiding fruit juices and sugary drinks in their water bottles. Additionally, teaching children good brushing habits at an early age will give them the gift of better oral health throughout their lives, as they will know how to take care of their own oral hygiene. Brushing, flossing, and regular dental checkups are all learned behaviors, and all parents and caregivers should lead by example with the children in their lives.”

Sponsored by the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy (“SCAA”), the New York State Department of Health (“NYSDOH”) and the New York State Oral Health Coalition, Virtual Oral Health Week provides a week of events and informational sessions for community partners, oral health and medical practitioners and health departments about new initiatives, best practices and the latest research on oral health. Scheduled webinars throughout the week, which are free and require no pre-registration, address topics including oral health care in underserved areas, water fluoridation, best practices for pregnant women and early childhood, caring for patients with special needs, and other topics.

**For more information:**

On the Erie County Health Department, visit <http://www2.erie.gov/health/>

On the New York State of Oral Health: Virtual Conference, visit

<http://www.scaany.org>

On the importance of early-childhood oral hygiene, visit

<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Brushing-Up-on-Oral-Health-Never-Too-Early-to-Start.aspx?nfstatus=401&nftoken=00000000-0000-0000-0000-000000000000&nfstatusdescription=ERROR%3a+No+local+token>

On articles and tips for better smiles in children, visit

<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/default.aspx?nfstatus=401&nftoken=00000000-0000-0000-0000-000000000000&nfstatusdescription=ERROR%3a+No+local+token>

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