



## Catawba County Public Health

[www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth](http://www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth)

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### **CATAWBA COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH PROMOTES EARLY DENTAL CARE**

HICKORY, NC –This month, Catawba County Public Health kicks off tours of its new dental clinic to help preschoolers feel more comfortable about visiting the dentist. The tours are part of Public Health's effort to promote the importance of regular dental check-ups for children beginning at the age of one.

Ten preschools will visit Public Health's Dental Practice from November through February including Balls Creek Elementary School, Conover School, Mountain View Elementary School, Oxford Elementary School, Shuford Elementary School, Snow Creek Elementary School, South Newton Elementary School, Startown Elementary School, Sweetwater Early Childhood Education Center, and Thornton Elementary School.

"It is important to begin dental visits at the age of one for two reasons," said Patrick Maddy, DMD, dentist, Catawba County Public Health. "Baby teeth, also known as primary teeth, are just as important to oral health as permanent teeth because they help guide permanent teeth into place. Also, starting dental check-ups early is one of the best ways to prevent cavities and ensure the development of proper oral care habits."

Taking into account that many children are often fearful of their first dental visit, Public Health staff make the tour kid-friendly by talking about how brushing teeth keeps the "sugar bugs" (or plaque) away and explaining why dental staff wear a mask and goggles, which can sometimes be perceived as scary. Children are provided the opportunity to see a dental care room, sit in a dental chair, and view the technology used in the practice.

"Education plays a critical role in preventing dental disease in Catawba County children," said Doug Urland, health director, Catawba County Public Health. "Finding a dental home is even more important. We recently expanded our dental practice to increase access to routine dental care for more children in our community."

According to the most recent data available from North Carolina Division of Medical Assistance, only 50.3% of eligible Catawba County children under age 21 were receiving dental services as of 2010.

Catawba County Public Health's Dental Practice accepts Medicaid and HealthChoice and serves children ages 1 to 21. Appointments can be made by calling (828) 695-5778.

Located off Fairgrove Church Road behind Catawba Valley Medical Center in Hickory, N.C., Catawba County Public Health provides health and education services to eligible men, women, and children in the community. For more information, please call (828) 695-5800 or visit [www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth](http://www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth).

*"Leading the Way to a Healthier Community"*

