



SCOTT COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT PUBLIC HEALTH CONNECTION

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BRIGHT SMILES BEGIN EARLY



Since 1949, February has been recognized as National Children’s Dental Health Month. The American Dental Association uses this time to educate families about the importance of good oral health for children. Cavities, also known as tooth decay, are one of the most common chronic diseases in children — yet they are also the most preventable.

So how do we prevent cavities? It’s simple: brush your teeth. Using a toothbrush at least twice a day and limiting sugar intake can make a big difference. That’s why this year the Scott County Health Department is promoting our tooth mascot, “Pearl,” with the slogan “JUST USE IT.” Pearl helps bring awareness to oral health and shows how something as simple as a toothbrush can help prevent cavities.

Since 2006, the state of Iowa has supported children’s dental health through the I-Smile program, which is available in all 99 counties in Iowa. The Program provides dental screenings, fluoride treatments, and oral health education in childcare centers and preschools.

Another component, I-Smile@School, places dental hygienists in qualifying schools where at least 40% of students receive free or reduced-price lunches. In our area, the Scott County Health Department serves four counties and reaches 28 schools through the I-Smile@School program. Hygienists provide dental screenings, fluoride varnish, and sealants to the adult molars for elementary-age children. As part of the program, families of children with dental concerns such as decay, reported pain, or no dentist on file will receive follow-up phone calls to help connect them with the dental care they need. Learn more about I-Smile at <https://hhs.iowa.gov/health-prevention/dental-oral-health/i-smile>. Need help finding a dentist? Contact the SCHD I-Smile Coordinator at 563-328-4114.



TOOTHBRUSHES ARE SUPERHEROS!

If we look at dental plaque under a microscope, we will see billions of bacteria!

What are bacteria, you ask? Bacteria are tiny, microscopic living organisms. They eat, drink, grow, reproduce, and get rid of waste. Some people call them “little bugs” —even though they aren’t technically insects.

These little bugs love sugar and starch. When they eat these foods, they produce waste products called acids (or toxins). These acids can damage your teeth and gums, causing cavities and gum disease.

The best way to remove plaque bacteria is by brushing and flossing your teeth every day. This is called mechanical (or physical) removal, meaning plaque is scrubbed and dislodged from the teeth and gums using a toothbrush and floss.

There is scientific evidence that bacteria can grow quickly—up to billions within just a few hours. That’s why your dental hygienist recommends brushing at least twice per day.

Have you ever heard the saying, “Brush at night to keep your teeth, and brush in the morning to keep your friends?” Just think how much better your breath will be when you brush all those toxin-releasing bacteria off your teeth!

Your toothbrush is your superhero—because if you JUST USE IT!, your teeth and gums will be clean, strong, and healthy.



Upcoming Events

- 2/19/2026, 12:00 PM: Scott County Board of Health Meeting, Scott County Administrative Center, 1st Floor Boardroom

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Our priority.