



**Northwestern
Health Unit**

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For a healthy mouth, health body 'Choose Less Sugar'

April is Dental Health Month and the Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) would like to encourage individuals and families across the region to take steps to improve oral health and decrease tooth decay. The health of your mouth is very closely linked to your overall health and well-being.

'Choose Less Sugar' is the focus of the Dental Health Month campaign. "High sugar drinks like pop, specialty coffees, energy drinks and sports drinks can cause cavities. Choosing water or milk instead of these sugar-sweetened beverages is healthier for your teeth as well as your body," states Silvana Edenburn, Clinical Dental Hygienist at the NWHU.

In addition, brushing your teeth twice a day with fluoridated toothpaste, flossing daily, eating a healthy diet and regular visits with a dental professional are key steps for keeping your teeth, gums and mouth healthy. Establishing good oral care habits early on is important for maintaining a healthy smile as you age.

Leading up to the Dental Health Month celebrations, 24 classrooms from schools across the region took part in the NWHU 'Sip, Smile, Snap!' photo challenge. Participating classes snapped pictures of themselves choosing healthier drinks over cavity-causing sugary alternatives. "We were thrilled with the schools' participation," says Edenburn. "Over 200 creative and unique photos were submitted that depicted students choosing healthy drinks while having fun and working together. Thank you to all contributing schools."

Mary Trist, grade 5 teacher at New Prospect School in Dryden notes, "The classroom-based exercise helped students develop a better understanding of the link between less-sugary drinks and good dental health. My students really enjoyed the photo challenge!"

Photos from the 'Sip, Smile, Snap!' photo challenge will be incorporated into a dynamic digital photo mosaic to help promote and celebrate Dental Health Month. The photo mosaic will be shared with regional schools and posted on the NWHU website at www.nwhu.on.ca.

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