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Division of Public Health Welcomes New Dental Director

The Division of Public Health (DPH) Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services (BOHDS) would like to welcome Dr. Nicholas Conte, who will serve as Dental Director for Delaware.

Dr. Conte is a prosthodontist who most recently served as the director of clinical research and education for Dentsply Sirona.

His prior experience includes both private practice and faculty at New Jersey Dental School (renamed the Rutgers School of Dental Medicine), where he taught both undergraduate and post-graduate prosthodontics.

Dr. Conte has lectured extensively both nationally and internationally, conducted clinical research trials, and worked on product development teams for impression materials, composites, adhesives, and cements. He lives in Lewes, Del., along with his wife, Whitney, and their daughter, Gwynn.

“I am very excited and honored to be the Dental Director and a part of the Division of Public Health,” Dr. Conte said. “I look forward to continuing the great work that has already been done, continuing some of the important partnerships established within the state, and fostering new relationships with external partners. I look forward to working with the Delaware dental community while improving general awareness about the importance of oral health and the key role it plays in our overall wellness.”

Healthy Smiles, Healthy You

Make sure to visit http://healthysmilesde.com/, a new oral health webpage designed be interactive and fun to use while providing valuable resources for clients.

This tool is geared toward children and features animated characters that provide information and encouragement to children of all ages to brush their teeth #2min2x per day, stay away from sugary drinks, and understand how tooth decay can impact their smile and overall health.
After a grueling election period, now is the time for some good old fashioned holiday fun! As you celebrate the holidays, consider one final campaign: Delaware’s No Cavity Campaign! Education is the first step to prevention when it comes to all health issues, especially oral health. A little knowledge can go a long way for providers, parents, and patients alike when it comes to keeping children cavity free.

The DPH No Cavity Campaign is a “train the trainer” program in which dental professionals, health care providers, and health educators all have the unique opportunity to help children in their area who may not have access to regular preventive dental care. By obtaining training and materials, trainees are equipped to go out into the community and share information on how to preserve and maintain oral health. Help Delaware campaign against cavities for children under age 5 by joining the No Cavity Campaign.

As a partner in the No Cavity Campaign, you can rally childcare providers to deliver information to parents about how they can keep their children cavity free. Your campaign strategy will be spreading the knowledge you have about home care, diet, and visiting the dentist and how it affects a child’s oral health and development. You will train the child care professionals on methods that they can use to lead parents in the mission to keep their children cavity free. As their Commander in Teeth, you can continue to monitor and guide them in their training expeditions. You can choose any number of child care programs, perhaps one that your child attends or others in your community.

This season, consider spreading a little more than just holiday cheer - spread the word about how to keep little smiles healthy. Plan to attend a session for your campaign training to lead your advisors to victory in accomplishing optimal oral health for all children. Elect to help children and families fight and win the war on cavities!

### Upcoming Training

Friday, Jan. 13, 2017, 11 a.m.—1 p.m.

Appoquinimink State Service Center
122 Silver Lake Road, Middletown, DE 19709

To register or for more information, call 302-744-4554 or email gena.riley@state.de.us.

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**Delaware Oral Health Coalition’s 2016 Annual Convening:**
**Bridging and Bonding Partnerships**

This fall’s annual convening of the Delaware Oral Health Coalition (DOHC) was held at Dover Downs Conference Center on October 7, 2016. The focus for the nearly 70 participants was oral health as a health equity issue and the role of partnerships. Participants discussed how to build and sustain organizational relationships, lessons from successful partnerships, and how to leverage efforts to promote population oral health.

The full day featured a keynote speech from Matthew Bond of the DentaQuest Foundation and presentations by Bobbi Jo Mutto and Gina Sharps from Marshall University School of Medicine. The DOHC would like to extend its sincere gratitude to all who attended and participated to make this event a success. These meetings strive to emphasize the value of a diverse coalition as it further allows us to work together to accomplish the goals set forth and address the pressing oral health needs of our community. The DOHC is always seeking members to contribute their time, talent, and passion for oral health equity to strengthen the coalition and help to improve the oral health of all Delawareans. Learn more about the DOHC and read a full report of the 2016 Annual Convening at the Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services website: [http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/hsm/ohphome.html](http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/hsm/ohphome.html).
For many people of all ages, going to the dentist evokes panic, making even a routine check-up a debilitating experience. Despite the fact that it may be difficult for some, no one can afford to neglect oral health as it is directly related to overall well-being. So, how can a person control their fear of the dentist in order to proceed comfortably with the important dental care that is necessary to keep us all healthy? The following tips may help alleviate anxiety and eliminate the scare from the chair.

Learn about today’s technology. Some fears adults have of the dentist stem from traumatic experiences from childhood. Dentistry has come a long way over the decades and modern methods, tools, and medicine make contemporary dentistry virtually painless. Topical anesthetic gels make injections almost undetectable and deep cleanings comfortable for patients. Many advances have been made to dentistry to end the pain that was once associated with dental treatment and to make it as pleasant as possible. The more your patients know about these advances, the more they may be put to ease about the experience.

Ask Questions. Many times, the actual procedure is not as scary as the fear of the unknown. When patients are unsure of what is about to happen to them, it heightens their nervousness. Encourage them to ask the dentist in advance what they can expect during the procedure and how certain situations are handled. Also encourage patients to discuss concerns or problems they’ve had in the past.

Bring A Comfort Object. For children, holding a teddy bear or blanket can give them that added security needed to get through their dental appointments. Adults can listen to music in headphones via their phone or iPod. Some offices even have televisions chairside so that TV shows or movies can offer additional distraction and relief.

Come Up With A Cue. Encourage your patients to establish a “sign,” such as raising their hand, to communicate during treatment that they are uncomfortable or wish to stop. Remind them they are always in control.

It is estimated that 75 percent of Americans experience some degree of dental fear. According to Dr. Peter Milgrom, director of the Dental Fears Research Clinic at the University of Washington in Seattle, an estimated 5 to 8 percent of adults are so fearful that they avoid dental care at all costs. Lack of preventive care can lead to a dental emergency requiring invasive treatment, which can then attribute to further dental fear and directly harm someone’s health.

When all else fails, pharmacological techniques can also be used with the help of a medical professional. Remember that no one is born afraid of the dentist. Encourage patients not to impose their fears onto their children. Avoid talking negatively about the dentist’s office or attempt to enforce good brushing habits by threatening the dentist, “the drill” or a “pulled tooth,” as this actually does more harm than good. Positive experiences at an early age pave the way for a lifetime of good, anxiety-free dental care.
Merry and Bright
How to make your smile sparkle this season

When the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry asked people what they’d like most to change about their smile, the response at the top of everyone’s wish list was “whiter teeth.” While brushing and flossing are the most essential ways of keeping your smile clean and healthy, even the most avid brushers may find their bright smiles are fading and becoming more yellow over time. Why do teeth change color? In knowing the answer to this question, you can help prevent the process of yellowing that occurs so often to our pearly whites.

Food and Drink: Every time we eat and drink we expose enamel (the white part of our teeth) to color pigments called chromogens that stain the outer most part of our teeth. Coffee, tea, and red wine are some of the biggest offenders. Rinsing with water after eating and drinking when a toothbrush is unavailable can help wash away stain-causing particles and prevent them from attaching to teeth.

Tobacco Use: Tar and nicotine: two chemicals found in tobacco that create stubborn stains. Tar is naturally dark. Nicotine is colorless but when it mixes with oxygen it turns into a yellowish, surface-staining substance. Ditching tobacco products for good can have a positive impact on the teeth and the rest of the body.

Age: Below the enamel (the hard white outer shell of your teeth) is a softer area called dentin. Over time, the outer enamel layer gets thinner with brushing and more of the yellowish dentin shows through. Always use a soft bristled toothbrush and avoid “scrubbing” teeth too hard. Gentle, circular motions when brushing are most effective and will not wear away enamel as quickly. Some electric toothbrushes even come equipped with a feature to warn people that they are applying too much pressure.

Trauma: When a person has been hit in the mouth, their tooth may change color because it reacts to an injury by laying down more dentin, which is a darker layer under the enamel. Any kind of injury to the teeth or mouth is best to have examined by a dentist, who can counsel on ways to regain the whiter, more appealing color of the affected tooth.

Medications: Tooth darkening can be a side effect of certain antihistamines, antipsychotics and high blood pressure medications. Young children who are exposed to antibiotics like tetracycline and doxycycline when their teeth are forming (either in the womb or as a baby) may have discoloration of their adult teeth later in life. Chemotherapy and head and neck radiation can also darken teeth. Teeth whitening can be a simple and cost effective way to whiten teeth using special tooth bleaches to make teeth brighter. However, it doesn’t work on everyone, is only effective on surface stains, and can sometimes cause sensitivity. Encourage your patients to talk to the dentist about what options might be best and remind them that knowing how to prevent discoloration in the first place is the best way to keep a healthy, bright smile.

For more information about the importance of oral health for both adults and children, visit www.healthysmilesde.com.