



Greene County Public Health

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Editorial

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 7, 2026

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Oral Health...Not Just a Children's Issue

May is National Smiles Month

Good oral health is about more than a bright smile — it is a key part of overall health at every age. As we recognize **National Smiles Month this May**, it's the perfect time to highlight the importance of oral hygiene for both youth and adults across our community.

At **Greene County Public Health**, we see firsthand how oral health impacts children, families, and older adults throughout Greene County.

Tooth decay remains one of the most common chronic conditions among children. It can lead to pain, missed school days, difficulty eating, and trouble concentrating in class. In Greene County, our public health dental data show that many children still experience untreated cavities — a preventable problem that can quickly become serious without routine care.

But oral health is not just a children's issue.

For adults, poor oral hygiene is linked to gum disease, tooth loss, and even broader health concerns such as heart disease, diabetes complications, and adverse pregnancy outcomes. When oral infections are left untreated, they don't stay confined to the mouth. The mouth is the gateway to the body, and inflammation or infection there can affect overall health.

The good news? Most oral health problems are preventable.

Simple daily habits make a significant difference:

- Brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
- Floss daily to remove plaque between teeth.
- Limit sugary drinks and snacks.
- Visit a dentist regularly for cleanings and checkups.

For families facing barriers to care, Greene County Public Health offers programs that help. While our agency no longer provides hands-on dental care, local school-based initiatives focus on prevention, education,

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and early treatment. We also work closely with programs such as WIC and other community partners to ensure families understand how nutrition and oral health go hand in hand.

It was never more evident than at the GuardCare event in 2024 that access to care remains a challenge for many residents. Transportation, cost, and lack of dental insurance can all stand in the way. That is why community awareness and prevention efforts are so critical. When we prioritize oral hygiene at home and seek preventive care early, we reduce emergency visits, lower healthcare costs, and improve quality of life.

Healthy smiles contribute to confidence, job readiness, and social well-being. For children, it can mean better performance in school. For adults, it can mean fewer missed workdays and improved overall health.

Oral health is not a luxury — it is a necessity.

This May, during National Smiles Month and beyond, Greene County Public Health encourages all residents to make oral hygiene a daily priority. Small, consistent actions today can prevent serious problems tomorrow.

For more information about local dental services and prevention programs, visit www.greenecophoh.gov or call 937-374-5600.

Together, we can build a healthier Greene County — one smile at a time.

For more information or questions, please call 937-374-5600 or email general@greenecophoh.gov.

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Your Accredited and Trusted Local Public Health Authority Since 1920***

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