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For Immediate Release

Healthy Smiles Day to provide free dental services to uninsured adults

MORGANTOWN, WV (Nov. 3, 2021) — Taking a cue from MCHD Dentistry’s annual Give Kids a Smile, MCHD Healthy Smiles Day will once again provide a free cleaning and checkup for adults 18 years and older who do not have dental insurance.

And it’s not a complete coincidence that it will occur the day before Thanksgiving.

“Healthy Smiles Day is a way to give back to the community by providing oral care for adults who do not have dental insurance,” said Dr. Youseph Kassar, interim program manager of MCHD Dentistry.

The event provides similar care to uninsured adults that the annual, nationwide Give Kids a Smile does for children 18 years and younger every February.

Those who qualify can make an appointment for Wednesday, Nov. 24, by calling 304-598-5108. MCHD Dentistry practitioners will be seeing patients between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

MCHD Dentistry created Healthy Smiles Day in 2019 and, in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, saw 24 participants last year. That number might fall a bit this year because as of Jan. 1, 2021, Medicaid now provides up to \$1,000 in dental benefits to adult patients annually.

“The dental coverage from Medicaid has been a great benefit to our community and state,” Dr. Kassar said. “I do believe this may have a lower turnout this year, but there are still patients who do not have dental insurance. These people will still benefit from an event like Healthy Smiles Day.”

Patients will receive a cleaning and checkup and, if needed, they also might be able to get some restorative work performed depending on the time and circumstances.

MCHD Dentistry has been safely seeing patients again since reopening two months after the start of the COVID pandemic, and all individuals entering Monongalia County Health Department are screened.

“Our infection protocols have been reinforced since the pandemic began,” Dr. Kassar said. “I am happy to say we’ve been seeing patients while keeping them and our staff safe during this pandemic.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), between 2014-17, only about 50% of adults in the United States ages 18 to 64 had dental insurance. Those percentages varied depending on the region. The South Atlantic region, which includes West Virginia, had one of the lower percentages, at 45.6%.

Also, according to the CDC, the percentage of adults ages 18 to 44 with untreated cavities from 2013-16 was 31.6%. Untreated cavities can lead to other health problems if an individual experiences an abscess, or infection, that can travel to other parts of the body.

Gum disease also increases the risk of having bacterial infection in the bloodstream, which can damage heart valves. The American Heart Association notes that research has shown a connection between heart disease and periodontal disease, the symptoms of which include gum infection, gum inflammation and tooth damage.

MCHD Dentistry the only full-service dental practice located within a West Virginia health department. Services include cleanings, exams, oral health education, oral cancer screenings, digital X-rays, dental sealants, mouth guards, simple extractions, root canals, bridges, crowns, implants, dentures and partials, custom bleaching trays, in-office bleaching, cosmetic bonding, porcelain veneers and Invisalign.

Providing same-day crowns, made possible by a new milling machine and a digital scanner, is the latest update at MCHD Dentistry.

Three years ago, MCHD launched Smile Express, a mobile RV dental clinic that visits schools in six West Virginia counties, seeing students who don’t have a dental home. It’s another example of MCHD Dentistry’s outreach, as is Healthy Smiles Day.

MCHD Dentistry also accepts a wide variety of payment options, including check, cash and credit card; CareCredit; sliding fee discount; new patient special; insurance; and Medicaid and CHIP.

Dr. Kassar joined MCHD Dentistry in June 2020, so this will be his second Healthy Smiles Day.

“It was a great experience that I thoroughly enjoyed,” he said. “I am excited for this year’s event.”

Check out monchd.org and follow MCHD on Facebook and Twitter @wvmchd, MCHD Dentistry on Facebook @mchddentistry, and on Instagram at #wvmchd for up-to-date information on health and wellness in the community.