



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON  
Health



# Brush Up on Oral Health

December 2014

Did You Know?

- **Healthy Bedtime Habits**
  - **Setting a Bedtime Routine: Brush, Bed, Book**
  - **Helping Parents Choose Books About Oral Health**
  - **Cook's Corner: Cheesy Red-Nose Reindeer**
- If a child is put to bed with a bottle or sippy cup with liquids that contain sugar, the child is at risk for developing tooth decay.
  - Many drinks that children like contain sugar, including infant formula, milk, fruit juices, fruit drinks, and energy drinks.



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## Healthy Bedtime Habits

Having a regular bedtime routine helps children learn to expect what comes next. Brushing children's teeth is an important part of the routine that helps keep children healthy.

This issue of *Brush Up on Oral Health* describes a program developed by the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) (AAP) to structure children's bedtime routines. It includes recommendations that Head Start staff can share with parents for choosing children's books on oral health. The issue also offers a recipe for a healthy snack that can be made in the Head Start classroom or at home.

## Setting a Bedtime Routine: Brush, Book, Bed

Many parents share with Head Start staff that getting their child to bed can be stressful. They say their child makes excuses to delay going to bed. Some children throw tantrums, ask for something to drink, or do other things that make bedtime frustrating.

To help parents create a bedtime routine that takes the battle out of getting children to bed, AAP created the [Brush, Book, Bed program](#). It promotes three simple and clear messages that Head Start staff can share with parents.

- **Brush.** Brush the child's teeth, or supervise the child's brushing. For children who do not have teeth yet, wipe the gums with a clean damp cloth. For children under age

3, use a smear of fluoride toothpaste to brush teeth. For children ages 3 and older, use a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste. For more information about fluoride toothpaste amounts, see the [September 2014](#) issue of *Brush Up on Oral Health*. After brushing, do not give the child anything to eat or drink before bed.

- **Book.** After brushing, let the child pick one or two books. Read the books aloud to the child in a comfortable spot.
- **Bed.** After brushing and reading, put the child to sleep in his or her bed. Sleep is very important to children's health and well-being.

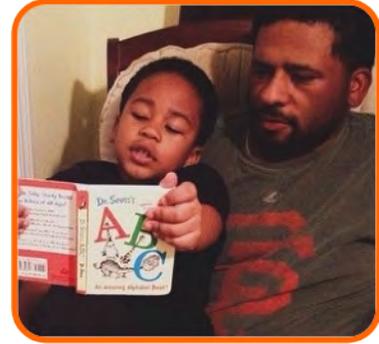


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It is important to stress to parents that consistency is the key to this approach. It may take some time to establish the routine. Once the routine is set, bedtime will become more pleasant for the parents and the child.

## Helping Parents Choose Books About Oral Health

Head Start staff can help parents understand that spending 15 minutes reading aloud every day helps improve a child's language development. It also promotes positive social and emotional development by creating a strong bond between parent and child. Reading books about oral health is a good way to accomplish these things and teach children about oral health at the same time.

A wide variety of children's books about oral health can be found in public libraries, bookstores, and discount stores. Books tell children about teeth and what they do, healthy eating, how to take care of teeth at home, visiting a dental office, and dentists' and dental hygienists' jobs.

Head Start staff can help parents choose books about oral health for their child by suggesting titles or encouraging parents to read books that meet the following recommendations:

- **Information in the book is correct.** Look for correct information. Examples include using the right amount of fluoride toothpaste or correctly describing the job of each dental office member or how fluoride helps prevent tooth decay.
- **The book says positive things about oral health.** Find a story that is positive. For example, a story about a dentist, dental hygienist, or dental office receptionist who is friendly can help a child feel good about dental visits. A story about a dentist or dental hygienist that praises a child for not having tooth decay is better than one about having a cavity filled.
- **The book does not use words that might make a child afraid of dental visits.** Look for words like shot, hurt, needle, pain, and other words that might scare a child. Do not read books with these words to a child because it might make the child afraid of dental visits.

- **The book uses words that a child can understand.** Make sure the book has short sentences and simple words. Check that the meanings of any oral health terms used are explained so a child can understand them.

Head Start programs can also keep books on oral health in the classroom. Parents can read the books to their child on site. If the Head Start program has a lending library, parents can check the books out.

## Cook's Corner: Cheesy Red-Nose Reindeer

Here's a delicious, healthy snack that children can make as a class project or at home with their families.

### Ingredients

Cheese slices, cut into triangles that are ¼- to ½-inch thick

Small pretzel twists

2 black olives, cut into small pieces

1 red pepper, cut into ¼-inch circles

### Directions

1. Put one corner of the cheese triangle into the bottom hole of the pretzel twist to make the first antler.
2. Put the other corner of the cheese triangle into the bottom hole of the second pretzel twist to make the second antler.
3. Add two black olive pieces onto the cheese to make the reindeer's eyes.
4. Add the red pepper circle onto the cheese to make the reindeer's nose.

**Safety tip:** An adult should slice ingredients.



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***School readiness begins with health!***