



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Health

Brush Up on Oral Health



September 2012

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Did You Know?

By age 2 most children have 20 primary (baby) teeth. There are 10 teeth in the upper jaw and 10 teeth in the lower jaw. Children start losing their primary teeth sometime between ages 5 and 7. The first teeth that fall out are usually the front teeth in the lower jaw. Children will not lose all of their primary teeth until they are 12 to 14 years old. Children who have recently lost several primary teeth may have difficulty chewing hard foods, and this should be taken into account when serving them foods.

View an [interactive tooth-eruption chart](#).



Welcome to the first issue of **Brush Up on Oral Health**. This monthly newsletter provides Head Start staff with information on oral health issues, including best and promising practices, current research, practical tips, and frequently asked questions. Health and social service professionals interested in improving the oral health of pregnant women, infants, and

children enrolled in Head Start and their families may also find the newsletter helpful.

As you welcome children to Head Start this new program year, it's important to remember that oral health plays a major role in a child's school readiness. We hope the information contained in this newsletter will help you think about ways you can help improve the oral health of the children in your program.

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Good Oral Health Is More Than a Pretty Smile

Good oral health is much more than a pretty smile. The health of a child's mouth can affect growth and development, ability to learn, behavior, and social interactions.

Children with poor oral health may have other problems:

- They may not grow and develop as well as they should.
- They might have a hard time concentrating and learning because they are in pain.
- They may miss a lot of school.
- They might develop serious problems, such as infections.
- They might not smile or may withdraw from family, friends, and teachers because their teeth don't look nice.
- They have less of a chance of doing well later in life, compared to children with good oral health.

The good news is that tooth decay can be prevented. Brushing twice a day with fluoridated toothpaste, eating regularly scheduled healthy meals and snacks, drinking water containing fluoride, visiting the dental office regularly, and getting preventive services and treatment, as needed, are the ingredients of good oral health.

Educating Head Start Teachers About Oral Health: Does It Work?

A study conducted by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill found that Head Start teachers who received any formal oral health training were more likely to:

- Provide classroom education about oral health.
- Use fluoridated toothpaste in the classroom.
- Help children brush their teeth in the classroom.
- Advise parents on brushing their child's teeth.
- Talk to parents about food choices that promote oral health.

Source: Kranz A.M., Rozier R.G., Zeldin L.P., Preisser J.S. (2012). [Oral health activities of Early Head Start and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs](#). *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 23(8), 1206–1222.

Choose and Use Head Start Oral Health Curricula

A variety of curricula are available to Head Start staff and training and technical-assistance specialists at no cost or at low cost. The curricula can be used to provide oral health education and training to pregnant women and children enrolled in Head Start, Head Start staff, and health professionals who work with Head Start.

To help you find the right curriculum for your Head Start program, use the [Choose and Use Head Start Oral Health Curricula](#) guide. It's four easy steps: select (1) desired user, (2) intended audience, (3) topics, and (4) availability. You can download a matrix showing all the curricula, too.

Cook's Corner: Recipes for Healthy Snacks

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

Frozen Bananas

4 medium ripe bananas

4 tablespoons low-sugar peanut butter or low-fat yogurt

½ to 1 cup crushed unsweetened whole grain cereal

Ice pop sticks

Cut bananas in half or thirds. Insert one ice pop stick lengthwise through the center of each banana section. Wrap the bananas on sticks in plastic wrap, and place them in the freezer until the bananas are frozen, about 2 hours. Spread a thin layer of peanut butter or yogurt over the bananas, and roll them in crushed cereal.

Serves 8–12

Note: To prevent choking, always serve peanut butter spread in a thin layer on foods. Do not let children eat spoonfuls of peanut butter. Also, do not serve peanut butter to children who are allergic to it. Head Start programs need to know if children have food allergies and which foods they are allergic to (see children's health records). Food-allergic reactions can range from mild skin or gastrointestinal (relating to the stomach and intestines) symptoms to severe, life-threatening reactions.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, and National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. (2011). [Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards—Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs](#) (3rd ed.). (pp. 160–161, 181). Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; Washington, DC: American Public Health Association.

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The National Center on Health welcomes your feedback on this newsletter issue as well as your suggestions for topics for future issues. Please forward your comments to OHRInfo@georgetown.edu.

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