



Brush Up on Oral Health

July 2017

- **Pregnancy and Oral Health**
 - **Oral Health Concerns During Pregnancy**
 - **Tips for Head Start Staff to Help Pregnant Women Keep a Healthy Mouth**
- **Cook's Corner: Fruit and Cheese Flag**

Did You Know?

- Forty percent of pregnant women have tooth decay and/or periodontal disease.
- Pregnancy does not cause tooth loss.
- Babies do not take calcium from mothers' bones and teeth during pregnancy.



Pregnancy and Oral Health

Pregnancy is an exciting time in a woman's life. It is safe and important to get oral health care during pregnancy. For example, pregnant women can safely have their teeth cleaned, have X-rays taken, and receive treatment. Preventing oral disease can help keep women healthy during pregnancy.

This issue of *Brush Up on Oral Health* talks about oral health concerns during pregnancy and offers tips for Head Start staff to help pregnant women keep their mouth healthy. A recipe for a healthy snack that can be made in the Head Start classroom or at home is also included.

Oral Health Concerns During Pregnancy

Many pregnant women develop pregnancy gingivitis. Signs of gingivitis include red, swollen gums that bleed when brushing or flossing. Gingivitis happens because women's hormones change during pregnancy, making gums more sensitive to the bacteria that cause gum disease. If pregnancy gingivitis is not treated, the infection can lead to periodontal disease, which can impact the woman's overall health. For more information, see the [May 2017](#) issue of *Brush Up on Oral Health*.

Tips for Head Start Staff to Help Pregnant Women Keep a Healthy Mouth

- 1. Brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.** Remind pregnant women that brushing in the morning and just before bed removes bacteria that cause oral diseases. Using a soft bristled toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste helps prevent tooth decay and pregnancy gingivitis.
- 2. Floss once a day.** Help pregnant women understand that flossing once a day removes bacteria from the sides of each tooth where a toothbrush cannot reach. This is especially important for keeping gums healthy. Invite a dental hygienist or dentist to the program to show the best method and give pregnant women feedback on how to improve their flossing.
- 3. Consume healthy foods and beverages.** Consuming healthy foods and beverages, especially those low in sugar, helps keep pregnant women and their babies healthy. Teach pregnant women how to read nutrition labels to identify foods and beverages high in sugar. Remind pregnant women to drink fluoridated water throughout the day.
- 4. Receive oral health care during pregnancy.** Receiving oral health care during pregnancy is safe and important. Help pregnant women find a dentist if they don't have one. Ask for a referral from the woman's physician, the local or [state health department](#), the local or state dental association, social service professionals, or the Head Start state [dental hygienist liaison](#).
- 5. Tackle morning sickness.** Many women feel sick or vomit during pregnancy, especially during the first 3 months. Many times, having small snacks throughout the day helps. But this can increase a pregnant woman's risk of developing tooth decay. Encourage pregnant women to choose healthy foods low in sugar or to brush more than twice a day. For women who vomit often, urge them to rinse with a teaspoon of baking soda mixed in a cup of warm water to stop stomach acids from attacking their teeth.
- 6. Role-play a dental visit.** Role-playing can help relieve fears that pregnant women may have about dental visits. Prepare a script with the woman where she tells the dental team that she's pregnant and when her baby is due. Work with her to develop questions that cover any concerns she has about getting care while pregnant. Invite a dentist or dental hygienist to participate in the role-playing activity.

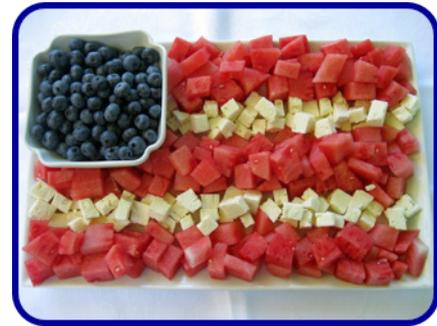


Cook's Corner: Fruit and Cheese Flag

Here's a delicious healthy snack that children can make in a Head Start classroom or at home with their families.

Ingredients

- 1 small watermelon, chopped into bite-size pieces
- 1 pound low-fat white cheese such as provolone, mozzarella, or Monterey Jack, cut into small squares
- 1 quart blueberries



Directions

1. Place a small square bowl at the top left-hand corner of a square plate or tray.
2. Arrange watermelon and cheese pieces in alternating rows to form the stripes of a flag.
3. Put the blueberries in the bowl to form the stars of the flag.

Makes 8–10 servings

Safety tip: An adult should slice ingredients.

Contact Us

The National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness welcomes your feedback on this issue, as well as your suggestions for topics for future issues. Please forward your comments to health@ecetta.info or call 866-763-6481.

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ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES



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