



Brush Up on Oral Health

November 2017

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Did You Know?

- **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, and fruit drinks.**



Healthy Bedtime Habits

Having a regular bedtime routine teaches children 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 the [Brush, Book, Bed](#) program developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics to structure children's bedtime routines. The issue includes recommendations that Head Start staff can share with parents for choosing children's books on oral health. It also offers a recipe for a healthy snack that can be made in the Head Start classroom or at home.

Helping Parents Set a Bedtime Routine

Some parents share with Head Start staff that getting their child to bed is stressful. They say their child makes excuses to delay going to bed. Some children throw tantrums, ask for a drink or a snack, or leave the bedroom.

To help parents set a bedtime routine that takes the battle out of getting children to bed, use 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 under age 3, use a smear of fluoride toothpaste to brush teeth. For children ages 3 to 6, use a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste. For more information about fluoride toothpaste amounts, see [Healthy Habits for Happy Smiles: Brushing Your Child's Teeth](#). 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 reading, put the child to sleep in his or her bed. Sleep is important to children's health and well-being.

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

Head Start staff can help parents understand that spending 15 minutes reading aloud every day can improve a child's language development. It also promotes positive social and emotional development by creating a strong parent-child bond. Reading books about oral health is a good way to do both of 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 foods, brushing teeth, 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.** Check Head Start's [oral health webpage](#), or ask your [state dental hygienist liaison](#) if you are not sure that the oral health information in the book is accurate. 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 oral health terms 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: Apple Cider Smoothie

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

Ingredients

- 2 red apples, cored but not peeled
- ½ cup water
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

Directions

1. Pour the water into the blender.
2. Add the apples to the blender.
3. Blend on high for 30 seconds or until the smoothie is creamy
4. Add the ground cinnamon and stir.

Makes 2 servings

Safety tip: An adult should slice the 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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School readiness begins with health!



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES



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