



Brush Up on Oral Health

Encouraging Children to Drink Water

Water is important for good oral health and overall health and well-being. Drinking water every day helps move nutrients throughout the body, gets rid of waste, gives skin a healthy glow, keeps muscles moving, and promotes a healthy weight.

This Brush Up on Oral Health tip sheet describes why drinking water is important for good oral health. It provides resources Head Start staff can use to promote drinking water.



Drinking Water Is Important for Good Oral Health

- **It strengthens teeth.** Drinking water with fluoride is one of the easiest and best ways to help prevent tooth decay. Water with fluoride makes it hard for the bacteria that cause tooth decay to create acid. Fluoride also strengthens the outer layers of the teeth, making them more resistant to acid attacks. If the local, county, or state health department says not to drink water from the tap, make sure the new water source contains fluoride.
- **It keeps the mouth clean.** Drinking water washes away the bacteria that cause tooth decay and also washes away food left in the mouth after eating. Water also dilutes acids made by the bacteria that cause tooth decay. Even though drinking water helps keep the mouth clean, it is still important to brush the teeth with fluoride toothpaste twice a day.
- **It fights dry mouth.** Water helps create saliva, which is the mouth's first defense against tooth decay. Saliva contains calcium and other minerals that work into the outer layers of the teeth to keep them strong. It also keeps food moist so it can be swallowed easily and clears away food left in the mouth after eating.
- **It does not contain sugar.** Water is sugar-free, so drinking it doesn't allow the bacteria that cause tooth decay to make acid. Drinking water instead of beverages that have natural or added sugar lowers the risk for developing tooth decay.



Resources Head Start Staff Can Use to Promote Drinking Water

Explore the following resources:

- [Healthy Habits for Happy Smiles: Encouraging Your Child to Drink Water handout](#)

This parent handout provides tips for encouraging children to drink water.

- [I Like My Teeth posters:](#)

These posters share positive messages about drinking water with fluoride, brushing with fluoride toothpaste, and children's oral health. The posters can be used as a teaching aid in classrooms and at parent events.

- [Drinking Water with Fluoride](#) [PDF, 896KB]
- [Fluoride: Cavity Fighter](#) [PDF, 154KB]
- [Strengthen Your Body: One Glass at a Time](#) [PDF, 852KB]

- [Increasing Access to Drinking Water and Other Healthier Beverages in Early Care and Education Settings](#) [PDF, 3.7MB]

This guide from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention gives information on how to make water available at all times.

- [Potter the Otter Curriculum Toolkit: A Teacher's Guide](#)

This toolkit includes interactive educational materials and activities for use in the classroom and home. It contains books, posters, table tents, stickers, paper puppets, a musical CD, recipe cards, and water pledges. Many of the materials in the toolkit are bilingual (English and Spanish).

- [Rethink Your Drink](#)

This website from Action for Healthy Kids gives tips and resources to teach parents about the amount of sugar and calories found in common beverages and their impact on health.



This publication was developed with funds from cooperative agreement #90HC00022 for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, by the National Center on Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety. This publication may be duplicated for noncommercial uses without permission. This publication is in the public domain, and no copyright can be claimed by persons or organizations.



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES



National Center on

Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety