



October 2021 | Issue No. 8

Stress and Oral Health

Welcome to Resources to Make You Smile! This monthly newsletter features information and tools Head Start staff can use to help families promote good oral health. These tips will help Head Start staff support families, pregnant people, and children, including children with disabilities. The newsletter also includes a recipe for a healthy snack that children can make in a Head Start classroom or at home with their families.

Stress and Oral Health



Everyone has felt stress at one time or another. It's a natural reaction to physical, mental, or emotional strain. Stress can push us to deal with challenges and meet the demands of daily life. However, too much stress can have a negative impact on children's and adult's health, including their oral health. Dealing with major challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic has increased stress for everyone.

In a February 2021 poll, the [American Dental Association](#) found that a majority of dentists reported increased stress-related oral health conditions among their patients since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. These oral conditions included teeth grinding and clenching and chipped and cracked teeth.

Explore the [Discovering the Impact of Stress on Oral Health](#) tip sheet to learn more about how stress affects oral health. Discover strategies Head Start staff can use to help children and adults manage stress.

Resources for Parents

Share these resources with parents to help manage stress and support social and emotional well-being.

[Managing Stress with Mindful Moments](#)

Watch these videos about how breathing and movement strategies can help children calm big emotions.

[Supporting Social and Emotional Well-Being](#)

Social and emotional well-being is the foundation for early childhood mental health. Explore these resources to learn more about early childhood mental health.

[Take Care of Yourself: Reduce Your Stress](#)

Learn how stress comes into your life and the steps you can take to care for yourself and reduce your stress.

[Taking Care of Ourselves: Stress and Relaxation](#)

Use these resources to help yourself and others combat stress.

Cook's Corner Recipe: Spider Sandwich

Ingredients

1 slice whole wheat bread
1 tablespoon peanut butter or low-fat cream cheese
6 pretzel sticks
2 black beans or 1 blueberry cut in half

Directions

1. Cut two rounds in the bread using a cookie cutter, biscuit cutter, or glass.

2. Spread a thin layer of peanut butter or cream cheese on one side of the bread circle.
3. Press 3 pretzel stick "legs" onto each side of the peanut butter- or cream cheese-covered bread circle.
4. Top the peanut butter- or cream cheese-covered bread circle with the other bread circle.
5. Add two dots of peanut butter or cream cheese on top of the sandwich to hold the black beans or blueberry "eyes" to the spider.

Makes 1 serving

Safety tip: To prevent injuries, an adult should slice ingredients.



Stay Informed

Please share this issue with who may be interested. Find past issues of [Resources to Make You Smile!](#) on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC).

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Join [MyPeers](#) to connect with Head Start and early childhood colleagues around the country on this and other topics. The **Health, Safety, and Wellness** community currently has more than 1,500 members who are networking, sharing, and learning from each other. Find it under "All Communities" and select the blue "Join" button.

We Want to Hear from You

Send your questions or comments to the National Center on Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety at health@ecetta.info or (toll-free) 888-227-5125.

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