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## Tooth Decay and Sugar

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 help Head Start staff support families, pregnant people, and children. 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.

### Tooth Decay and Sugary Foods and Drinks



Tooth decay happens when bacteria in our mouths use the sugar in foods and drinks to make acids that attack teeth. Children who often consume foods and drinks containing added or natural sugar throughout the day are more likely

to develop tooth decay than children who consume them less often.

Explore the [Understanding How Sugar Contributes to Tooth Decay](#) tip sheet to find out how consuming foods and drinks containing sugar can increase a person's risk for developing tooth decay. Learn how to read ingredient lists on food labels to identify sugar in foods and gather tips to share with parents about limiting their child's sugar intake.

## **National Nutrition Month**

March is [National Nutrition Month](#) and a great time to promote healthy eating to help prevent tooth decay. Use the resources below to raise staff and parents' awareness about the importance of children's oral health. Learn about activities that can be done in the classroom and virtually with families.

### **[Cook's Corner: Recipes for Healthy Snacks](#)**

Find recipes to make in the classroom, include in a family newsletter, or share on Head Start programs' social media pages. Programs can also send a sugar-free recipe card home with each child.

### **[Oral Health for Maryland's Kids: A Head Start Teacher's Guide for Creating Health Smile](#)**

Lesson 5, I Can Do a Lot to Keep My Teeth Healthy: Eat Smart, can help teach children about eating smart to keep teeth healthy.

### **[Nutrition.gov: Toddlers](#)**

Use activities and resources from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to teach children and parents about healthy eating. This page is also available in [Spanish](#).

## **Resources for Parents**

Share these [Healthy Habits for Happy Smiles](#) handouts to encourage parents to learn about the impact of eating practices on the development of tooth decay in children.

- [Choosing Healthy Drinks for Your Young Child](#)
  - [Encouraging Your Child to Drink Water](#)
  - [Giving Your Child Healthy Snacks](#)
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## Cook's Corner Recipe: Veggie Rainbow

### Ingredients

4 bell peppers (red, green, yellow, and orange), sliced into thin strips  
1 head cauliflower, cut into bite-sized pieces  
1 cup low-fat ranch dressing

### Directions

1. Arrange one slice of each pepper strip on a plate or in a bowl to form a rainbow.
2. Place cauliflower pieces on each side of the rainbow to form a cloud.
3. Spoon 1 tablespoon of ranch dressing onto the plate or bowl for dipping.



**Makes 15 to 20 servings**

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

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### Stay Connected

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 1,100 members who are networking, sharing, and learning from each other. Find it under "All Communities" and select the blue "Join" button.

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

Did someone forward you this newsletter? [Subscribe](#) to stay up to date!

## 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](mailto:health@ecetta.info) or (toll-free) 888-227-5125.

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