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## Staff Wellness: Adult 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 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.

### Oral Health for Adults



Healthy oral hygiene is just as important for adults' overall health and well-being as it is for children. When adults have healthy mouths, they can articulate clearly, eat food, and feel good about themselves.

Did you know that oral health offers clues about overall health and that problems in the mouth can affect the rest of the body? Like other areas of the body, the mouth contains bacteria, which are mostly harmless. But the mouth is the entry point to the digestive and respiratory tracts, and some of these bacteria can cause disease. Normally, the body's natural defenses and proper oral hygiene practices like brushing and flossing keep harmful bacteria under control. However, if oral hygiene is poor, bacteria can reach levels that might lead to oral infections, such as tooth decay and gum disease.

## Resources for Head Start Staff

### [Promoting Oral Health for Adults](#)

Learn about common oral health problems that some adults face and how these problems can increase their risk for other health issues. Find tips on what Head Start staff, parents, and other adults can do to keep their mouths healthy. This tip sheet is part of the [Brush Up on Oral Health](#) series.

## Resources for Parents

Share these resources with parents to reinforce positive oral health messages.

### [Oral Health: A Window to Your Overall Health](#)

Use this webpage from Mayo Clinic to help families learn about how the health of their mouths can affect their well-being.

### [Healthy Mouth, Healthy You: The Connection Between Oral Health and Overall Health](#)

Use this handout from Delta Dental to help parents understand that oral health is part of whole body wellness and that there's a strong relationship between the mouth and the rest of the body.

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## Cook's Corner Recipe: Cheese and Apple Pirate Ships

### Ingredients

1 apple  
8 to 10 ounces low-fat cheese, such as cheddar, Colby-Jack, or mozzarella  
8 to 10 pretzel sticks

### Directions

1. Cut apple into 8 to 10 slices.
2. Cut cheese into square or triangle pieces.
3. Put an apple slice on a plate or napkin.
4. Put 1 pretzel stick above the apple slice to make the mast of the ship.
5. Put 1 or 2 cheese slices on top of or next to the pretzel stick to make the sail(s).



**Makes 4 to 5 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. Members of the **Health, Safety, and Wellness** community are currently 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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