



National Center on  
Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety



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## Toothbrushing in Head Start Programs

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.

### Toothbrushing in Programs



According to the U.S. Surgeon General, oral health is integral to the general health and well-being of all Americans, and all Americans can have good oral health. Head Start staff promote good oral health by teaching and facilitating healthy habits for children.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a widespread decline in children's oral health status. A simple strategy to address this problem is brushing with fluoride toothpaste, an effective measure to prevent tooth decay. It is safe for Head Start programs to return to toothbrushing. Staff can help children brush and develop positive oral health habits that will last a lifetime. Scheduling time for children to brush their teeth with fluoride toothpaste during the program day ensures each child brushes at least once daily.

## Resources for Staff

### [Brushing Teeth at the Classroom Table](#)

Learn about the benefits of brushing as a group at the classroom table, the amount of fluoride toothpaste to use, and how to clean and store toothbrushes.

### [Steps for Toothbrushing at the Table: Growing Healthy Smiles in Early Care and Education Classes](#)

Watch this video to learn how to begin a daily toothbrushing program in Head Start programs. The video can also be used to train staff on how to prepare the area where toothbrushing will occur, the process for toothbrushing as a group, how to clean up after brushing, and how to safely store toothbrushes.

### [Toothbrushing in Head Start Programs During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Discover best practices for toothbrushing activities in Head Start programs and find recommendations to prevent the spread of COVID-19 during toothbrushing.

### [Operational Guidance for K–12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning](#)

Review guidance from the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control regularly to stay up to date on how to keep children and staff safe in Head Start programs. Adapt classroom toothbrushing practices as needed based on current policies and recommendations.

### [COVID-19: Risk Reduction Strategies](#)

Find resources and infection control strategies to help ensure a healthy and safe environment for children and staff. Reinforce your knowledge with the two-part [Preventing Infectious Diseases in Early Childhood Programs](#) course.

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## Cook's Corner Recipe: Cream Cheese and Black Olive Penguin Snack

### Ingredients

- 3 large whole black olives
- 1 small carrot stick
- 4 oval-shaped whole wheat crackers
- 4 ounces low fat cream cheese

### Directions

1. Slice one olive crosswise to make four circles
2. Slice remaining olives lengthwise into quarters.
3. Slice carrot into circles, then cut carrot circles into quarters.
4. Spread cream cheese on one side of each cracker.



5. Place olive circle at one end of the cracker to form the penguin's head.
6. Place two olive slices on sides of cracker to form the penguin's arms.
7. Place one carrot quarter into olive circle to form the penguin's beak.
8. Place two carrot corners on cracker to form the penguin's feet.

**Makes 4 servings**

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

Office of Head Start (OHS) | 330 C Street, SW | 4th Floor Mary E. Switzer Building | Washington, DC 20201 | <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov> | 1-866-763-6481 | [Contact Us](#)

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