



National Center on
Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety



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Promoting Oral Health in Head Start Programs and at Home

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, expectant parents, 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 Promotion



Teaching families about oral health throughout the program year is a valuable service provided by Head Start staff. Repeating oral health messages reminds families about the importance of keeping their mouth healthy and how to do it.

Head Start staff can promote good oral health habits among families in many ways. They can engage children and parents in discussions about oral health and encourage parents to promote and model good oral health habits at home.

Staff also play an important role in helping children understand that good oral health helps them stay healthy and learn. During the program day, staff can incorporate oral health

messages and activities into learning activities. Brushing teeth together at the table allows staff to model correct toothbrushing techniques. It also helps children establish good oral health habits to last a lifetime.

Resources for Staff

Review these [Brush Up on Oral Health](#) tip sheets for messages and approaches that staff can share with parents to encourage them to value and practice good oral health habits. The tip sheets describe the key role parents play in their child's oral health and include resources that staff can use to motivate parents:

- [Engaging Parents in Their Child's Oral Health](#)
- [Incorporating Toothbrushing in Bedtime Routines](#)
- [Promoting Oral Health During a Home Visit](#)
- [Promoting Oral Health for Babies](#)
- [Promoting Oral Health in Head Start Programs and at Home](#)

Check out the seven lesson plans and enrichment activities in [Oral Health for Maryland's Kids: A Head Start Teachers Guide for Creating Healthy Smiles](#). Use the curriculum to teach children and their families about oral health, instill positive attitudes about oral health, and encourage good oral health habits. Each lesson plan features learning objectives, background information for teachers, and Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework domains and elements.

Show the [Steps for Toothbrushing at the Table: Growing Healthy Smiles in Early Care and Education Programs](#) video to train staff on how to begin a daily toothbrushing program. This video provides instructions for how to prepare the area, lead the toothbrushing process, clean up after brushing, and safely store toothbrushes.

Resources for Parents

Share these [Healthy Habits for Happy Smiles](#) handouts to reinforce conversations with parents about what they can do to promote good oral health habits at home:

- [Brushing Your Child's Teeth](#)
- [Establishing a Bedtime Routine for Your Child](#)
- [Taking Care of Your Baby's Oral Health](#)

Show these [Sesame Street](#) videos to teach children and parents how to take care of their teeth:

- [Brushy Book Nighty Night](#)
 - [How Much Toothpaste?](#)
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Cook's Corner Recipe: Cucumber Salad

Ingredients

1 pound cucumbers, thinly sliced
1 small red onion, halved and thinly sliced
1¼ teaspoon salt
3 tablespoons apple cider vinegar or red wine vinegar
1 tablespoon fresh dill, chopped (optional)
Ground black pepper



Directions

1. Place the cucumbers, red onion, and salt in a bowl and toss to combine.
2. Let the mixture sit for 20 minutes.
3. Pour off any liquid from the mixture.
4. Add the vinegar and dill (optional) to the mixture and toss to combine.
5. Season with black pepper as needed.

Makes 12 servings

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

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.

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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.