



National Center on  
Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety



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## Promoting Oral Health and School Readiness

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 and School Readiness



A child's oral health can affect all aspects of their life. School readiness depends on positive physical, social and emotional, language, and cognitive development. Oral health impacts each of these areas and is a key aspect of a child's school readiness.

Children with poor oral health may:

- Have a hard time concentrating and learning because they are in pain
- Miss more school days
- Develop serious health conditions, such as infections
- Show signs of stress, anxiety, or aggressive behavior because they are in pain
- Feel shy, unhappy, sad, or embarrassed because of the appearance of their teeth

The resources below can help staff and parents understand why taking care of primary teeth is important to children's development and school readiness.

## Resources for Staff

### [Promoting Oral Health and School Readiness](#)

Explore this [Brush Up on Oral Health](#) tip sheet to learn more about the impact of oral health on a child's ability to learn. Discover tips for Head Start staff to encourage good oral health habits among parents and in the classroom.

### [Oral Health Impacts School Readiness](#)

Read this handout to learn about the impacts of tooth decay on children's ability to learn, develop, and thrive.

### [Oral Health and Learning: When Children's Oral Health Suffers, So Does Their Ability to Learn](#)

Share this fact sheet with staff to strengthen their knowledge and understanding of the effects of poor oral health on school performance, social relationships, and school attendance.

## Resources for Parents

### [Be an Oral Health Champion](#)

Print this booklet for parents to help them learn about problems children with poor oral health might have. It also includes ideas for encouraging good oral health habits at home. Hang the [poster](#) in areas parents visit to remind them about their role in promoting oral health at home.

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## Cook's Corner Recipe: Apple and Peanut Butter Wedges

### Ingredients

2 small apples, cored and cut into wedges  
2 tablespoons peanut butter (hummus or cream cheese can be used as a substitute for peanut butter)



### Directions

1. Spread one side of each apple wedge with peanut butter.

**Makes 6 to 8 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.