



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON  
Health

# Brush Up on Oral Health

## June 2013

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## Did You Know?

Before the 1950s, standard pop or soda bottles were 6½ ounces. By the early 1990s, 20-ounce bottles were the norm, and today bottles are even bigger—up to 42 ounces.

Forty-four percent of children ages 18 months to 2 years consume drinks with natural or added sugar every day. This amount increases to 70 percent among children ages 2 to 5.



## Healthy Drink Choices

Like most foods, many drinks have natural or added sugar. When children consume drinks with natural or added sugar often throughout the day, their risk for developing tooth decay increases (See [Brush Up on Oral Health, May 2013](#)).

This issue of *Brush Up on Oral Health* focuses on making healthy drink choices, identifying drinks with sugar, and what Head Start staff can do to help parents prevent tooth decay by promoting healthy drink choices (milk and water) and limiting drinks with sugar.

During a baby's first 6 months of life, breast milk is best. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that children continue to be fed breast milk after age 6 months and as long as the mother and child wish. AAP also recommends that children be fed whole milk until age 2, unless the child's primary care provider recommends reduced-fat milk for children ages 1 to 2 because of health issues. Water and low-fat (1 percent) or non-fat milk are the best drink choices for children over age 2.

It is important for parents and Head Start staff to give children plain water, ideally fluoridated tap water, throughout the day instead of drinks with natural or added sugar. It's also important to encourage children to drink water.

### Many Drinks Have Sugar

New drinks appear in the market every year. Many are promoted as organic or healthy. Parents often don't know that many drinks, like the ones listed below, have natural or added sugar:

- Flavored milk, such as chocolate, strawberry, and vanilla milk
- Non-diet pop or soda
- Fruit drinks, such as fruit punch and juice cocktails
- Vitamin water
- Sweetened teas
- Energy and sports drinks
- 100 percent fruit juice, such as apple, grape, and orange juice

Sugar-free drinks like diet pop or soda can also harm teeth. The carbonation that makes these drinks bubbly can wear away the outer covering of teeth. This makes a tooth's outer surface thinner and more likely to develop decay.

### Helping Parents Promote Healthy Drink Choices: What Head Start Staff Can Do

Head Start staff can do many things to help parents prevent tooth decay by promoting healthy drink choices and limiting drinks with sugar.

- Encourage parents to give children plain water, ideally fluoridated tap water ([see \*Brush Up on Oral Health\*, April 2013](#)).
- Explain to parents that if a baby breastfeeds often throughout the day or night, they need to wipe the milk from baby's gums with a clean damp cloth.
- Educate parents that children should not be put to sleep with a bottle or sippy cup containing drinks with natural or added sugar.
- Remind parents to give children ages 6 months and older no more than 4–6 ounces of 100 percent fruit juice per day. Explain that children do not need juice, and suggest that parents give children frozen or fresh fruit that has been mashed or cut into bite size pieces instead. If parents offer juice,



tell them to serve it in a cup without a lid. A sippy cup should only contain plain water.

- Show parents [The New Drink Pyramid](#), an easy way to understand what drinks to give children, and when. Give parents the handout to take home and keep in their kitchen.

## Cook's Corner: Recipes for Healthy Snacks

### Chocolate Banana Smoothie

#### Ingredients

- 1 medium-sized ripe banana (one with a few brown spots is perfect)
- 1 tablespoon cocoa powder
- 1/4 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1/4 cup low-fat milk

#### Directions

1. Put the banana, cocoa powder, yogurt, and milk into a blender.
2. Cover the top of the blender and blend the mixture until it's smooth.
3. Pour drink into glasses and serve.



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