



Brush Up on Oral Health

August 2016

Did You Know?

- **Oral Health and School Readiness**
 - **Oral Health Is More than a Pretty Smile**
 - **Resources Head Start Staff Can Use to Promote Oral Health**
 - **Cook's Corner: Gazpacho**
- Tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease. It affects more than one-fourth of 2- to 5-year-olds.
 - Tooth decay is 100 percent preventable.



Oral Health and School Readiness

What happens during a child's first five years of life is critical to a child's health, development, and ability to succeed in school and later in life. All Head Start health services are based on the premise that a child must be healthy to be ready to learn. Oral health plays an important role in a child's school readiness.

This issue of *Brush Up on Oral Health* describes the impact of oral health on a child's health and development. It includes strategies and resources

Head Start staff can use to promote oral health among parents and in the classroom. A recipe for a healthy snack that can be made in a Head Start classroom or at home is also included.

Oral Health Is More than a Pretty Smile

Good oral health is much more than a pretty smile. The health of a child's mouth can affect his or her growth and development, ability to learn, behavior, and social interactions.

Children with poor oral health may:

- Have a hard time concentrating and learning because they are in pain.
- Miss more school days.
- Develop other serious health conditions, such as infections.
- Withdraw from family, friends, and teachers and not smile because they are self-conscious about the appearance of their teeth.

The good news is that tooth decay can be prevented. Brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, eating regularly scheduled healthy meals and snacks, drinking water containing fluoride, visiting the dental office regularly, and getting preventive services and treatment, as needed, are the ingredients of good oral health.

Resources Head Start Staff Can Use to Promote Oral Health

The National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness provides a variety of resources that can be used to promote oral health among parents and in the classroom:



- [**Health Manager's Orientation Guide: School Readiness Begins with Health!**](#) offers information to help health managers achieve Head Start's program performance standards. The oral health section in **Health Topics: Delving Deeper**, chapter 4 of this guide, includes information, checklists, and other resources to help children meet oral health standards.
- [**Making the Link Between Health and School Readiness**](#) is a tool designed to help programs better understand the link between their school readiness goals and their health services plan. The section on oral health offers strategies for:
 - Promoting the link between oral health and school readiness to improve access to and engagement in learning.
 - Building and strengthening partnerships to expand oral health services that support children's ongoing engagement in learning.
 - Developing oral health policies and procedures that promote child development.
- [**Oral Health: Tips for Health Managers**](#) identifies 10 strategies oral health managers can use to promote good oral health habits in pregnant women and children enrolled in Head Start.
- [**Oral Health Education Activities**](#) offers a variety of materials to help Head Start staff and others provide oral health education to pregnant women, children, and families. Topics include dental visits, fluoride, nutrition, oral health care, oral hygiene, and safety and emergency first aid. [**Oral health resources for Spanish-speaking families**](#) are also available.

Cook's Corner: Gazpacho

Here is a delicious healthy snack that children can make in a Head Start classroom or at home with their families.

Makes 4–6 servings

Ingredients

- 1 15.5-ounce can, chopped tomatoes
- 1 cup tomato juice
- 1 small cucumber, chopped
- ½ onion, finely chopped
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon vinegar
- ¼ to ½ teaspoon hot sauce (optional)
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper



Directions

1. Mix the chopped tomatoes, tomato juice, cucumbers, onions, garlic, vinegar hot sauce, salt, and pepper in a large mixing bowl.
2. Cover and chill for one to two hours before serving.

Safety Tip: An adult should slice the ingredients.

Contact Us

The National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness welcomes your feedback on this issue, as well as your suggestions for topics for future issues. Please forward your comments to health@ecetta.info or call 866-763-6481.

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This issue was developed with funds from grant #90HC0013 for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Office of Child Care, and Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau by the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness. This resource may be duplicated for noncommercial uses without permission.

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School readiness begins with health!



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