



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON  
Health

# Brush Up on Oral Health



## October 2013

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## Did You Know?

Oral health providers who serve Head Start programs work in many different settings, such as:

- Dental offices
- Community clinics
- Federally qualified health centers
- Dental and dental hygiene schools
- City, county, and state health departments
- School-based health centers

## Head Start and Oral Health Providers

Oral health providers are key in maintaining and improving the oral health of pregnant women and children. These providers can also help Head Start staff achieve their oral health goals.

This issue of *Brush Up on Oral Health* talks about ways that oral health providers can help pregnant woman, children, and Head Start staff. It also offers strategies for Head Start staff to partner with oral health providers.

## How Oral Health Providers Can Help Head Start

Here are some ways oral health providers can help pregnant women and children as well as Head Start staff.

- **Offer oral health education.** Oral health providers can teach pregnant women, parents, children, and Head Start staff about how to keep a mouth healthy and what to expect during a dental visit. They can also give Head Start staff ideas about oral hygiene lessons for the classroom. These activities include brushing teeth with fluoridated toothpaste and storing toothbrushes to make sure bacteria doesn't grow on the bristles or pass from one toothbrush to another. Providers can also let women and Head Start staff know that it is

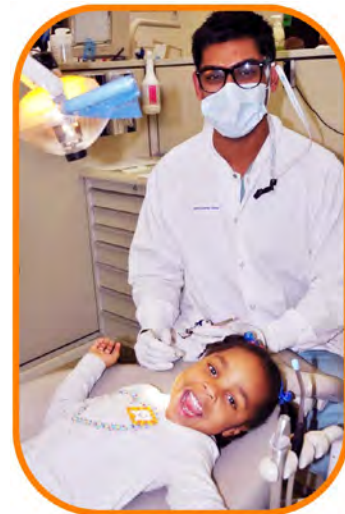


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safe to get oral health care during pregnancy. And providers can tell women about dental insurance coverage like Medicaid.

- **Screen children to find oral health problems.** Oral health providers can do visual screenings to find children who may have oral health problems. If a child has an urgent problem, oral health providers know about resources in the community that can help the child get care.
- **Provide preventive oral health care.** Dentists and dental hygienists can give preventive care like cleanings, fluoride varnish, and sometimes dental sealants to children in Head Start.

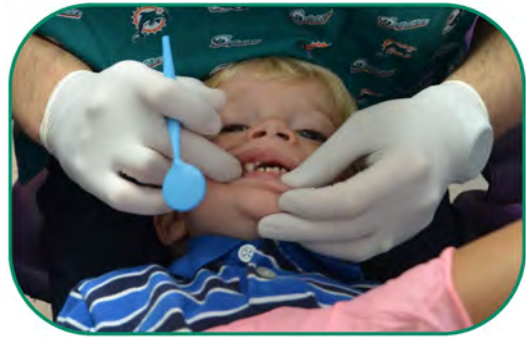


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- **Recruit other oral health providers to serve as dental homes.** Oral health providers who partner with Head Start can encourage other oral health providers to serve as dental homes for pregnant women and children in Head Start.
- **Offer expert opinion and guidance.** Oral health providers can also help Head Start staff write or update policies and procedures that support Head Start's oral health goals.

## Partnering with Oral Health Providers: What Head Start Staff Can Do

- **Build relationships.** The personal touch goes a long way. Look for opportunities to talk with oral health providers and visit them in their offices. Share information about Head Start and how the program works to improve the oral health of pregnant women and children. Listen to providers' concerns. Work together to address everyone's concerns.
- **Ask providers to adopt a Head Start program.** Oral health providers who adopt a Head Start program often become Head Start oral health champions. Many times, these providers develop relationships with Head Start staff and the families that Head Start serves. They also tend to become dental homes for pregnant women and children in Head Start. For example, the Virginia Dental Hygienists' Association's [Adopt a Head Start](#) initiative encourages dental hygienists to adopt a Head Start program. Hygienists work to improve access to care, educate Head Start staff and parents, and act as oral health advocates for Head Start families.
- **Collaborate with state-based oral health programs.** Nearly every state health department has an [oral health program](#) that helps pregnant women and children find a dental home. For example, dental hygienists in Vermont's [Tooth Tutor Program](#) work with Head Start staff to find dental homes for pregnant women and children, offer classroom education, and do oral health screenings. Many programs also work with Head Start [state collaboration offices](#) to identify pregnant women and children eligible for Head Start and link them to state oral health programs.

- **Invite providers to serve as program advisors or Head Start health services advisory committee members.** Tap into oral health providers' knowledge and experience. Serving as program advisors or committee members improves oral health providers' knowledge and understanding about Head Start. It also reinforces Head Start staff's knowledge and understanding about the importance of oral health to the overall health of pregnant women and children.

## Cook's Corner: Recipes for Healthy Snacks

Here's a delicious healthy snack that children can make as a class project or at home with their families.

### Apple Roll Ups

#### Ingredients

- 1 apple, cored and sliced into thin wedges
- ½ lb. light or reduced-fat cheddar cheese, sliced thin
- ½ lb. deli meat such as beef, ham, or turkey, sliced thin

#### Directions

1. Place a slice of cheese on an apple wedge.
2. Wrap a slice of meat around the cheese and apple.

**Note:** For safety, an adult should slice the ingredients.



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Read all issues of *Brush Up on Oral Health* at [Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center](#).

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