



# Brush Up on Oral Health

**April 2016**

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**Did You Know?**

- By age 4 to 6 months, most children can drink small amounts from a cup held by an adult.
- By age 5 to 9 months, most children can hold a cup and drink with some spilling.
- By age 6 to 11 months, most children can hold a cup and drink with less spilling.



## **Weaning a Child from a Bottle**

For children who drink infant formula or breast milk from a bottle, at some point, parents will wonder if it is time to start weaning their child. As children begin to eat more solid foods and drink from a cup, parents can wean their child from a bottle.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommend that children be weaned from a bottle by age 12 to 14 months. The longer parents wait, the harder the process can be.

This issue explains why weaning from a bottle is important and offers tips that Head Start staff can share with parents to help. It also provides a recipe for a healthy snack that can be made in a Head Start classroom or at home.

### ***Why Weaning a Child from a Bottle Is Important***

Children who keep drinking from a bottle after age 14 months are more likely to develop tooth decay than children the same age who have been weaned. This is especially true if a child is allowed to drink throughout the day and/or at bedtime from a bottle filled with anything other than water.

Drinking from a bottle after age 14 months can also prevent the top and bottom front teeth from meeting and create an "open bite" when the child bites down (see photo). Like long-term thumbsucking, this behavior can affect appearance, interfere with ability to bite food and speak clearly, and cause crowding of permanent teeth.



In addition, children who keep drinking from a bottle after age 14 months tend to drink more milk than recommended. This can reduce their appetite for solid foods, which can cause nutritional deficiencies, such as an iron deficiency. Also, children who

keep drinking from a bottle after age 14 months may not develop the eating skills they need to stay healthy.

### *Weaning Tips for Head Start Staff to Share with Parents*

**Preparing for Weaning.** Some preparation may help make weaning easier.

- Do not introduce a bottle if the child is breastfed solely until age 9 to 12 months and never fed breast milk from a bottle. Serve breast milk, infant formula, or cow's milk (starting at age 1) in a cup.
- Starting at age 4 to 6 months, let the child drink water from a cup. This helps the child get used to drinking from a cup. A sippy cup can be used. However, sippy cups are meant to be used for a short time only to help a child move from a bottle to a cup.
- **Note:** AAP recommends that no fruit juice should be served to children under age 1. If fruit juice is served to children after age 1, it should be served in a cup at mealtimes and limited to 4 to 6 ounces per day.

### **Using a Gradual Approach.**

- Introduce a cup in place of a bottle when a child is least interested in feeding or at mealtimes when other people are drinking from cups.
- Feed small amounts of breast milk or infant formula in a cup. Feed the liquid slowly, tilting the cup so that only a small amount leaves the cup, so the child can swallow without hurrying.
- Let the child pick out a special new cup.
- Decrease the number of bottles you offer the child every day, and replace them, one at a time, with a cup of breast milk, infant formula, or cow's milk (starting at age 1).
- Stop giving the least important bottle first, such as one in the middle of the day.

### **Going Cold Turkey.**

- For about a week before taking bottles away, talk to the child about giving up the bottle. Remind the child often that soon he or she is no longer going to have a bottle. Then, remove all bottles from the house. Show the child they are gone.
- Offer a reward, such as an activity that the child enjoys, for making it through a day or night without a bottle.
- Serve a snack at the time of day when the child asks for a bottle most.
- Give the child a soothing object, such as a blanket or favorite toy, whenever he or she misses a bottle.



Deciding on which weaning approach to use depends on many things, including the child's age and ability to cooperate. Most parents find a gradual approach works well. However, this approach may not work for children who are very attached to a bottle. Taking a bottle away suddenly can be difficult for the child and the parents for a short time, but it may work best.

## Cook's Corner: Broccoli Cheese Bites

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

### Ingredients

- 2 cups fresh broccoli, cooked and finely chopped
- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup dried bread crumbs
- ½ cup shredded cheddar, Colby-Jack, or Parmesan cheese



### Directions

1. Mix all ingredients.
2. Shape mixture into patties 1 inch in diameter.
3. Heat oil in a skillet, then add patties and cook until both sides are crispy.

**Safety tip:** An adult should slice ingredients and cook on the stove.

### Contact Us

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

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***School readiness begins with health!***



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