



Brush Up on Oral Health

December 2016

- **Choosing Healthy Drinks**
 - **Milk and Water Are Healthy Drink Choices**
 - **Many Drinks Have Added Sugar**
 - **Helping Parents Make Good Drink Choices**
- **Cook's Corner: Cheesy Snowmen**

Did You Know?

- To keep children healthy, the American Heart Association recommends the following:
 - Children under age 2 should not consume foods with added sugar.
 - Children ages 2 to 18 should consume no more than 6 teaspoons of added sugar a day.



Choosing Healthy Drinks

Choosing healthy drinks is just as important as making good food choices. Many drinks have added sugar. When children consume drinks with sugar often throughout the day, their risk for developing tooth decay increases.

This issue of *Brush Up on Oral Health* focuses on choosing healthy drinks and identifying drinks with added sugar. This issue also discusses how Head Start staff can help parents prevent tooth decay by promoting healthy drink choices (e.g., milk, fluoridated tap or bottled water) and limiting drinks with sugar.

Milk and Water Are Healthy Drink Choices

During a baby's first year of life, breast milk is best. If an infant is not fed breast milk, the infant should be fed iron-fortified formula. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children be fed whole milk until age 2, unless the child's primary care provider recommends switching to reduced fat (1 percent) or non-fat (skim) milk sooner because of health reasons. Low-fat or non-fat milk and plain water, ideally fluoridated tap water, are healthy drink choices for children over age 2.

Many Drinks Have Added Sugar

Parents often do not know that many drinks, like the ones listed below, have 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

Helping Parents Make Healthy Drink Choices

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

- Encourage parents to give children plain water, ideally fluoridated tap water (see the [April 2013](#) issue of *Brush Up on Oral Health*). If parents prefer to use bottled water, encourage them to check the label to see if the water contains fluoride. Parents can also check the International Bottled Water Association's website for a [list](#) of bottled water brands that contain fluoride.
- Educate parents that children should not be put to sleep with a bottle or sippy cup containing drinks with natural or added sugar. If parents put the child to bed with a bottle or sippy cup, it should contain only water.
- Remind parents to give children ages 12 months and older no more than 4–6 ounces of 100 percent fruit juice per day. Encourage parents to give children frozen or fresh fruit that has been mashed or cut into bite size pieces instead of juice. If parents offer juice, tell them to serve it in a cup without a lid.
- Show parents [The 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.
- Share the [English](#) or [Spanish](#) version of the Healthy Habits for Happy Smiles handout *Choosing Healthy Drinks for Your Young Child* to reinforce messages about healthy drinks for children.
- Explain to parents that sugar-free drinks like diet pop or soda can 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.



Cook's Corner: Cheesy Snowmen

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

Ingredients

- 1½ pounds low-fat mozzarella cheese, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 4 thin pretzel sticks
- 3 tablespoons seedless blackberry preserves
- 4 grapes, cut in half

Directions

1. Break a pretzel stick in half and push each half into the sides of 1 cheese cube for arms.
2. Put the blackberry preserves in a small plastic bag. Cut a small corner off the bag, and squeeze small dots of preserves to make a face.
3. Build the snowman with 3 cheese cubes, and put a grape half on the top cube for a hat.



Makes 8 servings

Safety tip: An adult should slice ingredients and cut the bag.

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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