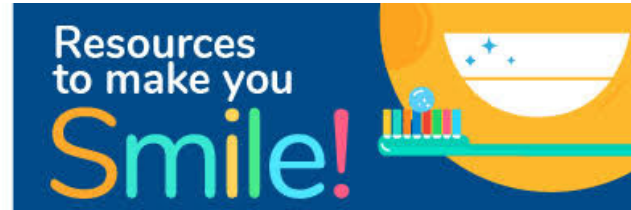




National Center on
Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety



ISSUE NO. 79

The Connection Between Sugar and Tooth Decay

Welcome to Resources to Make You Smile! This monthly newsletter features information and tools Head Start staff can use to help families promote good oral health. These tips help Head Start staff support families, pregnant women, and children. The newsletter also includes a recipe for a healthy snack that children can make in a Head Start program or at home with their families.



How Sugar Impacts Teeth

Sugar plays a key role in tooth decay. It is found naturally in foods like fruit or fruit juice, and may be added to other foods like soda, candy, chips, and crackers. Frequent or long-term exposure to foods containing natural or added sugar can harm teeth.

Bacteria that cause tooth decay break down foods and drinks that contain sugar to form acid that attacks teeth. Each time someone consumes foods or drinks with sugar, the acid remains in their mouth for 20 to 40 minutes. Children who have foods or drinks with sugar often during the day are more likely to develop tooth decay than children who consume them less often. Head Start staff can show parents how to identify sugar on ingredient labels and share ideas about making healthy food and drink choices.



Resources for Head Start Staff

[Understanding How Sugar Contributes to Tooth Decay](#)

Read this [Brush Up on Oral Health](#) tip sheet to learn how consuming foods and drinks with sugar can cause tooth decay. It includes strategies to share with parents on how to spot sugar on labels and limit their child's sugar intake.

[Cook's Corner: Recipes for Healthy Snacks](#)

Find recipes to make in a Head Start program, share in a newsletter for families, or post on social media. Programs can also send a recipe card home with each child. None of the recipes in the cookbook include added sugar.

Resources for Parents

Share these [Healthy Habits for Happy Smiles](#) handouts to encourage parents to learn about the impact of eating practices on the development of tooth decay in children:

- [Choosing Healthy Drinks for Your Young Child](#)
- [Encouraging Your Child to Drink Water](#)
- [Giving Your Child Healthy Snacks](#)

Cook's Corner: Baked Sweet Potato Sticks



Ingredients

- 4 small sweet potatoes
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 1½ teaspoon chili powder (optional)
- 1 teaspoon salt

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 425 F.
2. Cut each sweet potato into sticks that are 1 inch wide.
3. Mix the oil, chili powder, and salt in a small bowl.
4. Place the sweet potato sticks on a cookie sheet and brush with the oil mixture.
5. Bake the sweet potato sticks for 20 to 25 minutes, turning occasionally, until they are golden brown and tender.

Makes 6 servings

Safety tip: To prevent burns and other injuries, an adult should slice ingredients and supervise use of the oven.

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We Want to Hear from You

Send your questions or comments to the National Center on Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety at health@ecetta.info or (toll-free) 888-227-5125.



The Office of Head Start (OHS) supports children's growth from birth to age 5 through services focused on early learning and development, health, and family well-being.

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