



# Healthy Living With Head Start

## Celebrate Oral Health Month

Healthy Smiles are Happy Smiles

### More than Just an Apple a Day

Apples are not the only food that keep your teeth healthy. Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables will help build strong teeth. Here are a few of the common nutrients that will make your smile healthier:



**Calcium:** Helps to build strong, healthy teeth early in life. As children grow, it is important to keep teeth healthy to avoid decay and dental disease.

\* Sources: Dairy, Leafy Green Vegetables



**Fiber:** Keeps your mouth healthy by increasing saliva and can also help clean buildup off teeth.

\* Sources: All Fruit and Vegetables (including apples), Whole Grains

**Fluoride:** Protects teeth from acidity in the mouth. There is a lot of information available about fluoride supplements, ask your dentist and doctor about the best way to get enough fluoride.

\* Sources: Many public water sources, supplements, fluoridated toothpaste, and mouth washes



**Water:** Decreases bacteria activity and keeps your mouth at the right acidity. Water in place of sugary drinks also help reduce the decay.

# Learn to Love the Dentist

## The More Early Dental Visits, The Merrier

Visiting the dentist early and often is the best way to reduce your child's anxiety at the dentist's office. The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends taking your child to the dentist as soon as their first tooth comes in (or by age one). This will help your family dentist build a positive relationship with your child and make the dentist's office a less scary place.

Early trips to the dentist will keep you focused on preventative care to keep gums and teeth stay healthy. This is an easier and less painful approach than trying to stay ahead of oral health problems after they have started. Every cavity-free appointment is a chance to form positive memories associated with the dentist that will help the harder visits less traumatic.

Remember to keep a positive outlook and avoid allowing your anxieties to affect your child's visit. Always aim reinforcing positive feelings towards the dentist by avoiding words like hurt, scary, and nervous when explaining the dentist to a small child. Remember that your child will always look to you first for strength in a new experience. Keeping your cool will help keep your child calm.



## Playing Dentist at Home

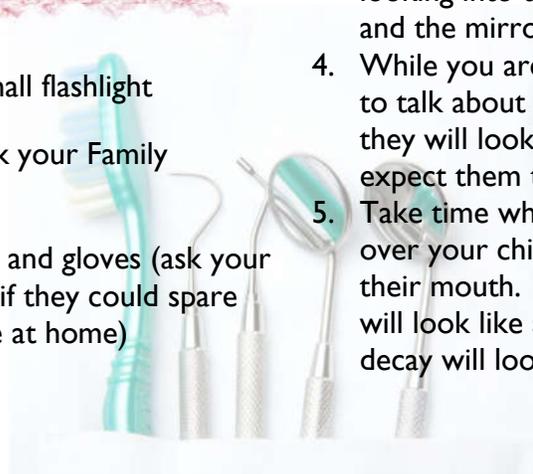
*Playing dentist can be a great way to get kids used to the idea of visiting the dental office. It can also be a good time for you to check in on your toddler's teeth and check for early signs of decay.*

### Materials Needed:

- \* A penlight or a small flashlight
- \* Dental mirror (ask your Family Partner for one)
- \* Medical face mask and gloves (ask your dentist or doctor if they could spare any for you to use at home)

### Directions:

1. Start off by washing everyone's hands.
2. Let your child choose if they would like to be the dentist or the patient first.
3. Take turns pretending to be a dentist by looking into the other's mouth using the light and the mirror.
4. While you are playing dentist, make it a point to talk about what the dentist does, what they will look like, and what your child can expect them to do.
5. Take time while you are the dentist to look over your child's teeth for any changes in their mouth. Remember that an early cavity will look like a small white spot on teeth and decay will look like a dark spot.



# Tooth Brush Painting

Like any motor skill, using a toothbrush takes practice. Brushing teeth is not always considered a fun activity to practice, use a little paint to get those little hands used to brushing.

## Materials Needed:

- \* Old toothbrushes (make sure to clean them well)
- \* Paper (get creative - use recycled paper bags)
- \* Washable Paint
- \* Water For Rinsing
- \* Old Shirt/Smock



## Directions:

- \* On a large washable surface, lay out paper, water, old toothbrushes, and paint in small shallow dishes (jar lids work well).
- \* Ensure all clothes are covered with smock or old shirt (this will get messy!)
- \* Use one toothbrush per paint color, dip toothbrush bristles into paint and apply paint to paper.
  - \* Experiment with different methods to get different painting types
  - \* Make sure toothbrushes stay out of the mouth for this activity
- \* Talk about all the different ways to use a toothbrush and why it is important to use it to clean your teeth as well as to make amazing art.



# Making Mealtime Memories

## Building a Healthy Smile

Using snack time as a way to engage children in oral health can be a fun and effective activity. This snack gives everyone a way to express their own smiles and gives you a chance to talk about foods that help keep your child's teeth healthy. Encourage children to play with their food to help them learn about new smells, textures, and tastes.

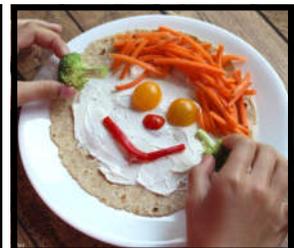
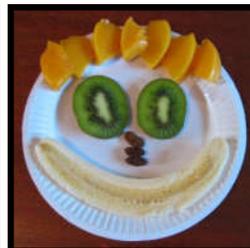
### Ingredients

- \* A variety of fresh fruits, whole grains, and vegetables
- \* Plates or washable placemats
- \* Muffin Pan for sorting
- \* Cookie Cutters to make shapes



### Directions

- \* Chop grains, fruits, and vegetables into small shapes and sizes and have children help sort everything into a muffin pan.
- \* Use the prepared fruits and vegetables to make a face with a big healthy smile.



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Please contact Amy Losee, Head Start Dental/Nutrition Specialist, with any questions or comments at (607) 433 - 8060

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