



By taking time to help your students achieve good oral health, you can make a big difference in their lives—both now and in the future!



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Be an Oral Health Champion

As you interact with the students in Head Start, you can change their lives in important ways. One of the ways that you can help them the most is by teaching them about good oral health.



Children with poor oral health have many problems:

- They may not grow and develop as well as they should.
- They might have a hard time concentrating and learning because they are in pain.
- They may miss a lot of school.
- They might develop serious problems, such as infections.
- They might not smile because their teeth are not bright and shiny.
- They have less of a chance of doing well later in life, compared with children with good oral health.



However, most oral health problems can be prevented. Here are some ideas for how you can help:

- Teach your students about nutrition. To grow and be strong, children need to eat healthy food every day (like whole-grain bread and crackers, fruits and vegetables, milk and milk products, meat, fish, chicken, eggs, and beans). Foods high in sugar are fine once in a while, but they should not be eaten often.
- Encourage children to drink water during the day, especially between meals and snacks.
- Reward children with pencils, stickers, words of praise, or fun activities instead of food like cake, cookies, and candy, or sweetened drinks like punch, fruit drinks, and pop (soda).
- Be aware that the bacteria that cause tooth decay can be passed from one person to another. Bacteria can be spread when children share food, lick pencils or other objects, or put toys in their mouths.
- Be a good role model. Let your students see you drinking water or milk and eating healthy snacks like whole-grain crackers, popcorn, yogurt, cheese, fruits, and vegetables.
- Help children brush their teeth at least once a day, after a meal, with fluoridated toothpaste. Praise them for brushing their teeth.

