

# NORTH CAROLINA CHILD CARE HEALTH AND SAFETY BULLETIN

NORTH CAROLINA CHILD CARE HEALTH AND SAFETY RESOURCE CENTER

FEBRUARY 2003

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1

## About The Resource Center

The NC Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center is a project of the Department of Maternal and Child Health, School of Public Health, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Funding for the Resource Center originates with the Maternal and Child Health Title V Block Grant of USDHHS's Health Resources and Services Administration/Maternal and Child Health Bureau, awarded to the University under a contract from the Division of Public Health, NCDHHS.

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## Oral Health

Oral health is an essential but often overlooked aspect of overall health. Food, and the nutrients it provides, is taken in through our mouths and chewed by our teeth. Our teeth and the muscles in our mouths, form our words so that we can communicate our thoughts and needs to those around us. Well cared for teeth and gums brighten our smiles which brighten our days.

Unfortunately, twenty percent of all children between the ages of 2 and 4 have dental cavities, a situation former Surgeon General David Satcher refers to as a silent epidemic. Low income families are the hardest hit leaving many children without needed dental care. Children with untreated cavities may experience pain, have poor attendance at childcare, become under weight due to poor nutrition and have negative social interactions due to their appearance. Some parents lack information about how to maintain good oral health and lack access to oral health providers.

Attention to oral health needs to begin in infancy. Even though baby teeth fall out, they need to be cared for. They act as a placeholder for permanent teeth and caring for them is a good way to establish a lifetime pattern of good oral health habits. Before baby teeth erupt the gums should be wiped with a soft, moist cloth after meals. Continue wiping gums and teeth after the first tooth appears. When teeth touch each other, begin flossing and using a small soft toothbrush. Fluoride is important for fighting cavities but if a child swallows too much, their adult teeth may have white spots. To avoid this, use only a pea size dab of fluoride



toothpaste and teach children to spit instead of swallowing the paste.

Healthy teeth and gums depend on a healthy diet, therefore providing nutritious meals and snacks is essential.

Children learn from the adults in their lives. Parents and caregivers can set good examples by eating healthy foods and brushing their own teeth after meals. Young children will need an adult's help and supervision in brushing until they are at least 4 or 5 years old because it takes time and practice to develop these skills and habits. Children should begin seeing the dentist when their first tooth appears and regularly thereafter. A clean healthy mouth and strong teeth feel and look good.

See **Ask the Resource Center** on page 8 for information on free and low cost oral health care that may be available to some low income families.

## References:

Community Voices: HealthCare for the Underserved. 2001. *Poor Oral Health Is No Laughing Matter*. Washington, DC, Retrieved 12/28/02 from [www.mchoral.health.org/PDFS/Learningfactsheet.pdf](http://www.mchoral.health.org/PDFS/Learningfactsheet.pdf)

National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care. (1997). *University of Colorado, Health and Safety Tips: Dental Care*. Retrieved 12/28/02 from <http://nrc.uchsc.edu/dental.htm>



## How Can Caregivers Help Children with Oral Health?

- **Help children brush during the day after meals.** Provide or ask parents to provide toothbrushes for children in your care. When children learn brushing and flossing skills early in life they establish healthy habits that last a life time.
- **Teach children to rinse their mouths with water.** If a toothbrush is not close at hand, children can rinse their mouths with water after eating. This will wash away sugars, acids and food particles that contribute to tooth decay.
- **Serve healthy foods.** Eating a variety of healthy foods, especially foods rich in calcium (dairy products, green leafy vegetables) will help strengthen permanent teeth as they form and keep the gums and mouth healthy.
- **Provide oral health information to parents.** Copy and share this newsletter with parents, especially the parent pages. Offer them information about dental care services and Health Check/Health Choice.

### Toothbrush Tips

Germs found in the mouth spread easily from one person to another. Prevent the spread of infections from germs found in saliva and blood, including bloodborne infections such as Hepatitis B or HIV, by following these guidelines.

- Always supervise children when they are brushing their teeth.
- Label children's personal toothbrush with their name.
- No sharing or borrowing of toothbrushes.
- Put pea size amount of toothpaste on foil or wax paper and have the child pick it up with her/his toothbrush.
- Store each toothbrush so it cannot touch any other toothbrush.
- Allow toothbrushes to air dry.
- If a child uses another person's toothbrush or if two toothbrushes touch, do not "disinfect the toothbrush". Throw them away and give the children new toothbrushes.
- Notify parents if a child uses the toothbrush of another child who is ill or has a chronic bloodborne infection.
- Replace toothbrushes every 3-4 months or sooner if bristles have lost their tone.

**Reference:** *ABC's of Safe and Healthy Child Care, NC version. 1999.*

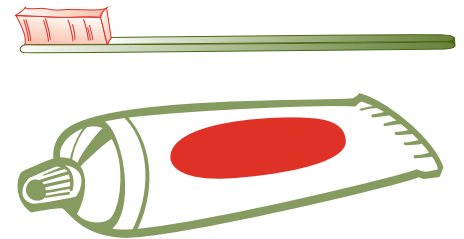
## What's the Best Way to Brush?

### Before teeth come in:

After each feeding, breast or bottle, gently wipe your baby's gums with a clean washcloth or gauze pad.

### After teeth come in:

Start cleaning your child's teeth as soon as they appear. Use a child-sized toothbrush. For infants, dentists and hygienists often recommend that parents use a simple, gentle, short, back and forth motion to brush and remove plaque.



**Once children are older, use the following method two times a day. The most important toothbrushing is the one done at bedtime.**

1. Brush the outer and inner surfaces of the upper and lower teeth.
2. Brush the chewing surfaces. Hold the brush flat and brush back and forth.
3. Brush the tongue. Use a back to front sweeping method to remove food particles and freshen your child's mouth.
4. Brush teeth long enough to thoroughly clean all tooth surfaces. The brushing motion itself helps remove stains.

### References:

Proctor and Gamble, (1999).  
*"What's the best way to brush?"*

[www.ada.org/public/faq/diet.html](http://www.ada.org/public/faq/diet.html), 12/31/02

[www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/wisdomtooth/oral.htm](http://www.umanitoba.ca/outreach/wisdomtooth/oral.htm), 1/3/03

# Smart Food Choices for Good Oral Health

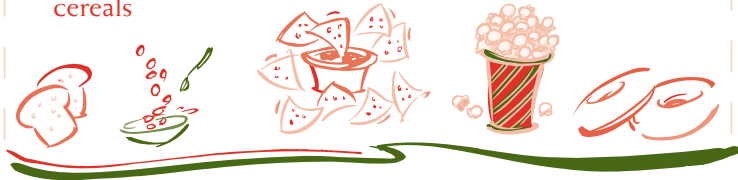
## Fresh fruits and raw vegetables

apples	pineapple	carrots
grapes	pears	cucumbers
oranges	broccoli	tomatoes
melons	celery	



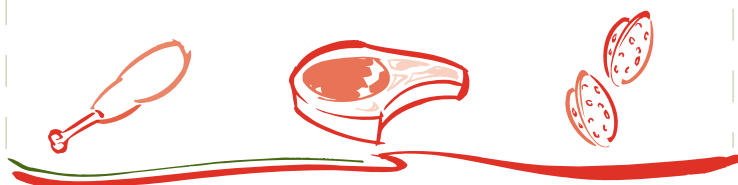
## Grains (especially whole grains)

bread	popcorn	pasta
plain bagels	tortilla chips	plain crackers
unsweetened cereals	pretzels	rice



## Meat, eggs, nuts and seeds

chicken	eggs	sunflower seeds
turkey	pumpkin seeds	nuts
sliced meats		



## Milk and Dairy Products

whole milk for children under 2  
low or non-fat milk  
low or non-fat yogurt  
low or non-fat cheeses  
low or non-fat cottage cheese



## Combination foods

pizza	casseroles
tacos	sandwiches
soups	



## Be a Picky Eater!

By being "picky eaters" and choosing nutritious foods, adults help children establish eating patterns that provide good nutrition, control weight, and keep hearts strong.

- choose sugary foods less often
- avoid sweets between meals
- serve a variety of low or non-fat foods from the basic food groups

## Special Feeding Considerations

When providing food to children less than 3 years of age or to children with special feeding needs always serve food that is easily managed by the children and supports their self-help skills. You may need to puree foods or soften raw foods by par-boiling them. Cut food into bite size pieces, serve food in small, manageable quantities and supervise the children while they eat. Use your judgment about which raw fruits and vegetables may be too difficult for these children to manage and may be choking hazards. Common choking foods for young children are firm fruits, carrots, celery, cherries, grapes, hard candy, nuts, hot dogs, peanut butter, popcorn, and dried fruits.

Be aware that allergies to food can be life threatening.

Common food allergies include nuts, wheat, soy, eggs, milk, and some seafood. Always check for posted food allergies and serve an alternative food for that child. Learn what to do if an allergic reaction occurs.

### Reference:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health (2000). NIH Publication No. 01-1680 *Snack Smart for Healthy Teeth*. Retrieved 12/28/02 from [www.nidcr.nih.gov/health/pubs/snacksmrt/sec4.htm](http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/health/pubs/snacksmrt/sec4.htm)

## Sweet Thoughts for Valentine's Day Chocolate: Good for you?

Saving your appetite for that box of chocolates you expect to receive for Valentine's Day? Chocolate is the number one food craved by women across North America. For men, it comes in second only to pizza. So it is with a bit of sweet delight that we wish to share with you the **benefits of eating chocolate!**

Chocolate contains carbohydrates, fats, and vegetable proteins, as well as large quantities of potassium and magnesium, some calcium and sodium, and vitamins A1, B1, B2, D, and E. It also contains *tryptophan*, an amino acid that increases the body's production of *serotonin*, an anti-depressant and natural stress reducer. Endorphins released by



the body when eating chocolate, can elevate mood and reduce pain. Phenols and *catechins* are both found in chocolate and may reduce the risk of coronary heart disease.

*Catechins* are also powerful antioxidants that may reduce the risk of some cancers.

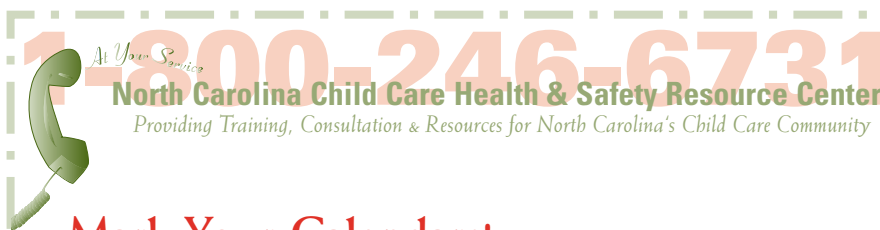
If that's not enough, consider the delicious fact that research was presented at the 2002 American Heart Association Scientific Sessions suggesting a link between eating flavanol-rich chocolate and improved blood vessel function.

Of course, eating chocolate is a personal decision, and the intent of this article is not to encourage **ANYONE** to actually **EAT CHOCOLATE**. The important message we hope to convey is that you should **BRUSH YOUR TEETH** after you eat chocolate – if you should decide to partake!

### References:

MedSci Communications & Consulting Co. (2002). *Chocolate . . . Food of the Gods?* Retrieved 12/28/02 from [www.medscicomcommunications.com/just\\_for\\_fun.htm](http://www.medscicomcommunications.com/just_for_fun.htm)

Chocolate Information Center (2002). *Research Presented at the 2002 American Heart Association Scientific Council Sessions Suggests Potential Link between Eating Flavanol-Rich Chocolate and Improved Blood Vessel Function.* Retrieved 12/28/02 from [www.chocolateinfo.com/ne/ne\\_article\\_04.jsp](http://www.chocolateinfo.com/ne/ne_article_04.jsp)



At Your Service

**North Carolina Child Care Health & Safety Resource Center**

Providing Training, Consultation & Resources for North Carolina's Child Care Community

## Mark Your Calendars!

### Healthy Child Care NC Conference

March 11, 2003

William and Ida Friday Center, Chapel Hill

Check our website <http://www.healthychildcarenc.org/> or call the N.C. Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center at **1-800-CHOOSE1** for more information.



## February is

American Heart Month  
Wise Health Consumer Month

**Feb. 6** is National Girls and Women in Sports Day

**Feb. 2 – 8** is Cardiac Rehabilitation Week

**Feb. 2 – 8** is National Burn Awareness Week

**Feb. 9 – 15** is National Child Passenger Safety Awareness Week

## March is

Save Your Vision Month  
Mental Retardation Awareness Month  
National Nutrition Month  
American Red Cross Month

**Mar. 3 – 7** is National School Breakfast Week

**Mar. 10 – 16** is Brain Awareness Week

**Mar. 16 – 22** is National Poison Prevention Week

**Mar. 25** is American Diabetes Alert Day

## April is

Alcohol Awareness Month  
Counseling Awareness Month  
National Autism Awareness Month  
National Youth Sports Safety Month  
National Child Abuse Prevention Month

parent



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## Oral Health Affects Learning

Early tooth loss caused by dental decay can result in a wide range of problems for a child. Early in life it can result in failure to thrive and impaired speech development. For school age children, it can result in absence from school, the inability to concentrate, and low self-esteem. About 51 million school hours each year are lost because of dental problems or related illness. Studies have shown that poor oral health can result in decreased school performance, poor social relationships, and less success later in life. For a child with a

toothache, the experience of pain is distracting and can result in the inability to concentrate on schoolwork.

Children are sometimes unable to verbalize their dental pain. Look for other signs that might indicate problems such as anxiety, fatigue, irritability, depression, or withdrawal from normal activities. Taking your children for early dental screening and assessment may prevent and/or treat these conditions and eliminate a potential barrier to learning.

Head Start and Early Head Start are examples of child care programs that provide dental screening, assessment, and referral services. Smart Start has also funded these services in some areas where the need was established, in an effort to provide every child with dental care and assure that each child was ready to enter school free from the barriers created by poor oral health and ready to concentrate on learning.

### References:

Academy of General Dentistry (2002). *What Foods Cause Tooth Decay in Children?* Retrieved 12/27/02 from [www.agd.org/consumer/topics/childrensnutrition/main.html](http://www.agd.org/consumer/topics/childrensnutrition/main.html)

National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health (NCEMCH) and Georgetown University (2001). *Oral Health and Learning: When Children's Oral Health Suffers, So Does Their Ability to Learn.* Retrieved from <http://www.mchoralhealth.org/PDFs/Learningfactsheet.pdf>

We encourage you to copy page 5 and 6 and distribute them to parents.

## Baby Teeth and Permanent Teeth

Care of the baby teeth is as important as looking after the permanent teeth. If your child loses his baby teeth by decay or accident too early, his permanent teeth can erupt prematurely and come in crooked because of limited space. According to orthodontists, 30 percent of their cases have their origins in the premature loss of baby teeth.

Erupting permanent teeth cause the roots of baby teeth to be reabsorbed so that by the time they are loose there is little holding them in place except for a small amount of tissue. Baby teeth ordinarily fall out around age 6 when the incisors and the middle teeth in front become loose. The molars, located in the back of the mouth, usually come out between ages 10 and 12. Children usually wiggle their teeth loose with their tongues or fingers, eager to hide them under their pillow for the "tooth fairy." If

your child wants you to pull out the already loose tooth, grasp it firmly with a piece of tissue or gauze and remove it with a quick twist. Occasionally, if a primary tooth is not loosening sufficiently on its own, your child's dentist may suggest extracting it.

### Who Lost a Tooth

*A tooth fell out and left a space,  
So big my tongue can touch my face.  
And every time, I show  
A space where something used to grow.  
I miss my tooth as you can guess.  
But then, I have to brush one less!*

### References:

American Academy of Pediatrics, (1999). *From Caring for Your School-Age Child Ages 5 – 12*, American Academy of Pediatrics, Elk Grove Village, IL. Retrieved on 1/2/03 from [www.medem.com](http://www.medem.com), go to library.

Creative Activities for Young Children. <http://www.angelfire.com/ma/1stGrade/page0.html>. Retrieved Jan. 3, 2003.

Continued on Page 6

1.800.246.6731

## Parents Role in Children's Oral Health

*Never allow an infant or child to take a bottle to bed.* This can lead to "bottle caries" or cavities. Because the milk or juice in the bottle remains in the child's mouth, it slowly decays the child's teeth during sleep. Letting the child have a bottle of milk or juice before going to bed (and then cleaning the teeth) will help him or her fall asleep without the risk of tooth decay.

*Limit the amount of soda that children drink.* Dentists believe that children today drink too much soda. Studies have shown that the contents of soda may steal calcium from the teeth. Drinking soda regularly can contribute to the erosion of tooth enamel. Give your children milk, water and fruit juice to drink.

*Limit foods that cause tooth decay.* Sugary foods such as soda and candy are not the only culprits. Food high in carbohydrates, some fruits, liquids, peanut butter, crackers and potato chips can also cause tooth decay. They are especially a problem when eaten frequently and if tooth brushing does not remove particles from the mouth.

*Limit amount of fruit juices that children drink.* While fruit juices are healthy alternatives to soda in terms of nutrition, some juices have fluoride content that is too high and may damage the enamel on children's teeth. Serve fruit juices that are lower in fluoride such as orange juice, lemonade, fruit nectars, and pineapple juice.



## Frequently Asked Questions Answers from the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry

*Q. What dental problems could a baby have?*

**A:** Dental problems can begin early. A big concern is Early Childhood Caries (also known as baby bottle tooth decay or nursing caries). Your child risks severe decay from using a bottle during naps or at night or when they nurse continuously from the breast. The earlier the dental visit, the better the chance of preventing dental problems. **Children with healthy teeth chew food easily, learn to speak more clearly, and smile with confidence.** Start your child now on a lifetime of good dental habits

*Q. When should bottle-feeding be stopped?*

**A:** Children should be weaned from the bottle at 12-14 months of age.

*Q. Should I worry about thumb and finger sucking?*

**A:** Thumb sucking is perfectly normal for infants; most stop spontaneously by age 2. If your child does not, discourage it after age 4. Prolonged thumb sucking can create crowded, crooked teeth or bite problems. Your pediatric dentist will be glad to suggest ways to address a prolonged thumb sucking habit.

*Q. Any advice on teething?*

**A:** From six months to age 3, your child may have sore gums when teeth erupt. Many children like a clean teething ring, cool spoon, or cold wet - washcloth. Some parents swear by a chilled ring; others simply rub the baby's gums with a clean finger.

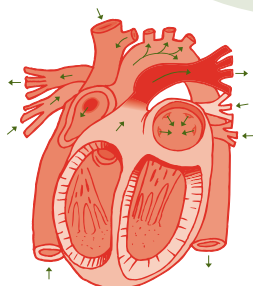
### Reference:

American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (date).  
*Dental Care for Your Baby.* retrieved 12/30/02 from  
[www.aapd.org/publications/brochures/babycare.asp](http://www.aapd.org/publications/brochures/babycare.asp).



## February is American Heart Month

### Heart Facts



Your heart is about the size of your clenched fist. The heart is a muscle that contracts and relaxes about 70 times a minute when your heart is at rest and more frequently when you are exercising. The heart squeezes and pumps blood to all parts of the body through an amazing system of blood vessels.

- The body of an adult contains over 60,000 miles of blood vessels!
- An adult's heart pumps nearly 4000 gallons of blood each day!
- Your heart beats some 30 million times a year!
- The average three-year-old has two pints of blood in his body; the average adult has at least five times more!
- A "heartbeat" is really the sound of the valves in the heart closing in order to keep the blood flowing in the right direction.

### "Know Your Heart" Activities

- Have the children look at a picture of a real heart and then construct a heart from play dough. They can use colored straws for blood vessels.
- Have the children use a stethoscope to listen to their hearts. A healthy heart has a "lub-dub" sound with each beat. This sound comes from the valves shutting on the blood inside the heart.
- Have children feel their hearts beating inside their chests before and again, after exercising. Ask them to describe the difference in their heartbeats. Ask them what makes the muscles in their arms get strong. What makes their heart muscle get strong? Let them know that muscles get stronger the more they are used.
- Tell the children their heart is a very important muscle that works all the time to pump blood through their bodies. Demonstrate by squeezing a clear empty dishwashing detergent bottle. Pass a couple around and let the children feel the air being squeezed out of the bottle. This is how the heart squeezes blood through the body.

#### References:

Discovery Communications, Inc. (2000). *Cardiovascular System*. Retrieved 12/28/02 from <http://yucky.kids.discovery.com/noflash/body/gp000131.html>

Kids Health. *All About the Heart*. retrieved 1/3/03 from, [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

Be Active Kids: A Kit for Teaching Healthful Eating and Physical Activity to Preschoolers. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation, pages 37-38.

## Happy Valentine's Day!

### Valentine's Day Activities

- Encourage children to hop, skip, jump, or tiptoe on a line of hearts or a heart shape taped onto the floor or drawn outside. Children stay fit and healthy by exercising and getting outdoors every day!
- Provide red, pink, and white construction paper, glue, stickers, doilies, ribbon, and markers for the children to design their own valentines. Write down the messages they want on the cards, or have them "write" their own.



#### Reference:

Early Childhood: Educational Preschool and Kindergarten Teaching Activities. *Valentine's Day*. Retrieved 12/28/02 from [http://members.tripod.com/~Patricia\\_F/valentine.html](http://members.tripod.com/~Patricia_F/valentine.html)



### Books for Children

- Munsch, Robert (1998). *Andrew's loose tooth*. New York: Scholastic, Incorporated.
- Rowan, Kate (1999). *I know why I brush my teeth*. New York: Scholastic, Inc.
- Weiner, Ellen (1999). *Taking food allergies to school*. Valley Park, MO: JayJo Books, LLC.
- London, Jonathan (1998). *Froggy's first kiss*. New York: Viking (Valentine's Day).
- Rey, H. A. (1998). *Curious George Goes to a Chocolate Factory*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

## Ask the Resource Center

*One of the toddlers in our center has badly decaying front teeth. The family has limited financial resources. Are there programs available to help this family access needed dental care for their child?*

This toddler would benefit from a visit to the dentist. Five to ten percent of children develop cavities early in childhood. Untreated cavities can cause pain making it difficult for a child to eat. This situation can prevent a child from receiving adequate nutrition and can inhibit normal weight gain.

Fortunately oral health care is available to families in need of dental care. Health Check, the children's component of Medicaid, provides routine cleaning, fluoride treatment and fillings (if needed), to eligible children twice a year. Sealants, x-rays, root canals, and extractions are also available. Stainless steel crowns and space maintainers are provided to children who have cavities or have lost teeth due to decay or accident.

Health Choice is an insurance program available to income eligible families at low cost. Oral health services provided by Health Choice are similar to those provided by Health Check, though there are some differences. For more information on Health Check and Health Choice, parents can call the Family Health Resource Line at 1-800-367-2229 or their local Department of Social Services.



## HEALTH BULLETIN

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### FOR MORE INFORMATION

or if you would like to send comments

### WRITE:

NC Child Care Health & Safety  
Resource Center  
1100 Wake Forest Road, Suite 100  
Raleigh, NC 27604

### OR CALL:

1-800-246-6731

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