



# Brush Up on Oral Health

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## March 2016

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## Did You Know?

- Dental hygienists receive clinical education and training to help people prevent tooth decay and other oral diseases.
- Every state has a dental hygienist liaison to promote good oral health for Head Start participants.



## What Is the Dental Hygienist Liaison Program?

Dental hygienists play an important role in promoting oral health and preventing oral disease. Because of this role, the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness (NCECHW), working in partnership with American Dental Hygienists' Association, created the Dental Hygienist Liaison (DHL) program. Under the

DHL program, one dental hygienist from each state volunteers to help promote oral health for pregnant women and children in Head Start.

This issue describes the role of DHLs and how they can help staff promote oral health for pregnant women and children in Head Start programs. A recipe for a healthy snack that can be made in a Head Start classroom or at home is also included.

## What Is the Role of a Dental Hygienist Liaison?

DHLs provide a communication link between NCECHW and Head Start programs in their state. DHLs work with local organizations to solve problems related to access to oral health care for pregnant women and children. They also share information about promoting oral health and preventing oral disease with program staff and families. And they share oral health resources for Head Start staff and families.

## How Can Dental Hygienist Liaisons Promote Oral Health?

DHLs can help in the following ways:

- Collaborate with state organizations and offices such as oral health programs and Head Start Collaboration Offices (HSCO). For example, DHLs can work with HSCOs to identify oral health needs and activities for local Head Start programs.

- Share information about the importance of oral health and of regular oral health visits, good nutrition and oral hygiene practices, and oral-injury-prevention strategies with program staff.
- Help Head Start staff identify and establish a dental home for pregnant women and children, and encourage pregnant women and parents of children to get all needed oral health care.
- Provide or work with a local oral health professional to provide:



- Training for center-based and home visiting staff on establishing partnerships to improve oral health for pregnant women and children and engaging parents to promote oral health. Training may also focus on preventive practices. For example, topics could be brushing with fluoride toothpaste, drinking fluoridated tap water, and receiving fluoride varnish applications.
- Oral-health-education sessions for families.
- Fluoride varnish applications for children.
- Serve on Head Start health services advisory committees or oral health advisory boards/coalitions to promote oral health for pregnant women and children.
- Meet with state and local oral health professionals to share information about Head Start's commitment to oral health and about assistance available to help program participants get oral health care.
- Share resources (e.g., educational materials, contact information for oral health professionals) with Head Start program staff and families.

To contact the DHL in your state, send a message to [health@ecetta.info](mailto:health@ecetta.info).

### Cook's Corner: Leprechaun Hats

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

**Makes 4–6 servings**

#### Ingredients

- 1 cucumber
- 1 yellow bell pepper, cut in half
- 4 ounces low-fat cheese such as mozzarella, provolone, cheddar, or Monterey Jack, cut into thin strips

#### Directions

1. Cut  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the cucumber into two to three 1-inch sections.
2. Stand the cucumber sections up, and cut each section in half to make the top of the hat.
3. Cut the other  $\frac{1}{2}$  cucumber into thin strips that are a little longer than the cucumber sections to make the brim of the hat.



4. Cut pepper into small squares.
5. Take 1 cucumber section, 1 strip of cheese, 1 cucumber strip, and 1 pepper square to form a hat.

**Safety tip:** An adult should slice ingredients.

## Contact Us

The National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness welcomes your feedback on this newsletter issue, as well as your suggestions for topics for future issues. Please forward your comments to [health@ecetta.info](mailto:health@ecetta.info) or call 866-763-6481.

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***School readiness begins with health!***



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