

## Health Literacy in Early Childhood Newsletter #4

*January: Oral Health*

Welcome to our Health Literacy Newsletter! Each month, we will be sharing information with you to help your program provide health literate information and supports as we navigate a school year unlike any other.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an extreme effect on everyone's health worldwide. Schools and programs are expected to provide more robust health and safety information than ever before. Providing that information in a health literate way is extremely important to keeping yourself, children, family members and community healthy and safe.

# LITTLE TEETH ARE A BIG DEAL

**They may be little, but baby teeth play a BIG role in a child's overall health!**

### Why is our oral health important?

Your mouth is a window into the health of your body. Taking care of your mouth can help to prevent cavities, pain, infection, and disease. Oral Health is very important for children because their primary teeth affect how a child chews food, speech development, social skills, positive self-esteem, and overall health.

### What is a cavity?

A cavity develops when a tooth decays or breaks down. It starts as a tiny hole or opening on the hard surface of your tooth, and it can grow bigger and deeper over time if left untreated. Cavities are caused by bacteria, frequent snacking, sugary drinks, and not cleaning your teeth.



**Strong, healthy teeth!**



**Decaying teeth with many cavities!**



### Tooth Decay is almost 100% Preventable!

**There are many ways to practice good oral hygiene!**

- Brush 2x a day for 2 minutes each time!
- Use fluoride toothpaste!
- Drink fluoridated water (like NYC tap water)!
- Eat a balanced diet and limit sugar sweetened beverages such as juice and soda!
- Get a check-up with your dentist every 6 months!

A child is old enough to brush their own teeth when they are able to tie their shoes independently! Until then, they need a parent or caregiver to help them brush!

### What is a dental home?

The dental home is the ongoing relationship between the dentist and the patient. Oral health care is delivered in a comprehensive, continuously accessible, coordinated and family-centered way. **Children should have their first dental appointment by age one!** If the parent is unable to have the child's oral screening completed due to lack of a dental home or medical insurance the program can use their partnerships with a dental program to fulfill the dental screening with the consent of the parent or provide them with referrals for a dental home or medical insurance.

### Oral Health During COVID-19

School-based oral health care has been on hold in New York State due to Covid-19, however that does not mean our oral health is on hold! It is important to encourage parents to continue to brush their child's teeth 2 times a day, and continue all oral hygiene recommendations.

**Pediatric dental clinics in NYC are open and it is safe for families to visit the dentist.** Dentists are using personal protective equipment (PPE) and screening protocols to protect families from Covid-19 at their dentist appointment.

Your toothache can't wait! Schedule an appointment with your dentist today if you are experiencing any pain.

### How much toothpaste should I use?



Under Age 3 - Smear Sized Amount



Over Age 3 – Pea Sized Amount

### Helpful Resources

- Steps for Brushing Teeth for Young Children [NYU brushing guide](#) also in [Spanish](#) and [Chinese](#).
- List of [Dental Clinics in NYC](#) that care for young children and accept most common insurance
- [Questions to Ask When looking for a Dental Office](#)
- Check list for Child Care Staff: [Best Practices for Good Oral Health](#)
- [Colgate Bright Smiles Bright Futures resources for families](#)

### Professional Learning

- Pre- Recorded Webinar From NYU Dental
  - [Infants and Toddlers](#)
  - [3-Year-Olds and 4-Year-Olds](#)
- [Sign up for Live Workshops with NYU Dental](#), all families and educators are welcome.
  - **January 25, 2021 9:00a.m.-10:00am**
  - **January 27, 2021 1:00pm-2:00pm**

For any questions or comments please reach out to [hsac@strongschools.nyc](mailto:hsac@strongschools.nyc)