

HEALTHY HABITS FOR FAMILIES



Winter 2013

NUTRITION

February is National Children's Dental Health Month. To prevent cavities and maintain good oral health, your diet—what you eat and how often you eat—are important factors. Changes in your mouth start the minute you eat certain foods. Bacteria in your mouth convert sugars from the foods you eat to acids. The acid begins to attack the enamel on teeth, which starts the decaying process. Choose foods that are good for your general health, and good for your dental health:

- Eat a variety of foods for overall health. Eat fewer foods containing sugar and starches between meals.
- The best food choices for the health of your mouth include cheeses, chicken or other meats, nuts and milk. These foods are thought to protect tooth enamel by providing needed calcium and phosphorus to teeth.
- Also choose firm/crunchy fruits (apples, pears) and vegetables. These foods have high water content, which dilutes the effects of the sugars they contain, and stimulate the flow of saliva.

The best beverage choices are water and milk. Limit sugary drinks, like sodas or some fruit juices.



Spiritual Health & Mindfulness: The New ABCs of Education

By Helen Duane, LCSW

According to Susan Kaiser Greenland (2010), author and mindfulness educator, a well-rounded education includes a new set of ABCs, not just the traditional reading, writing and arithmetic. Her new ABCs of education—Attention, Balance and Compassion—broaden education systems beyond traditional academics and serve the whole child.

In The Children's Center's Wellness and Mindful Living program for 3–5 year olds in January, balance and compassion were focused on. From the book *One* by Kathryn Orosko, an award-winning anti-bullying book, the children learned that compassion means treating others as you would want to be treated. As they participated in three-legged races, the children learned to work together and that being mindful can be fun!

Kristina Weaver, manager of the Parrish Sleep Disorders Center, shared the importance of self-care with the children. They learned why sleep helps them grow, have better attention and learn new things.

RECIPE

Chocolate Protein Pudding

A delicious, creamy vitamin- and protein-packed chocolate pudding! High in calcium and good for your teeth! A yummy, healthy treat!

- 1 serving chocolate whey protein powder
- 1 serving (1/4 package) Jell-O sugar-free chocolate pudding mix
- 3/8 c. unsweetened Vanilla Almond Breeze (or chocolate if you like it extra chocolatey!)

1. Blend all the ingredients in a blender. You may have to scrape the sides a couple of times to get the powder mixed in well
2. Pour into a bowl and enjoy! Add fruit for a complete and very filling snack!

Makes one serving.



A three-legged race helps kids learn to work together, and that being mindful can be fun.

FROM THE PHYSICIANS PERSPECTIVE

Dental caries (cavities) are the most common chronic disease in children aged 6–19 years. Reportedly, one in seven 3–5 year-olds has untreated tooth decay. Having decay in baby teeth increases the risk of cavities in permanent teeth because the caries-causing bacteria are already present. Additionally, children who have had toothaches in the past six months were almost four times more likely to have a grade point average lower than the median.

- **Preventing Cavities:**

- Avoid putting babies to bed with a bottle
- Introduce a cup at 6-months of age
- Less than 2 years old: Clean teeth daily with a small brush or moist cloth.
- 2–6 years old: Clean teeth daily with a pea sized amount of fluoride toothpaste and a toothbrush. An adult should ALWAYS brush after the child until age 6.

- **Regular dental visits** should start at the first birthday. The child's current dental health can be evaluated; they can learn about healthy teeth and how to prevent cavities. Visits should occur at 12, 24, 30, and 36 months, and every six months thereafter.

- **Flossing:** To remove the food and plaque in between teeth, parents should start flossing the child's teeth when the molars start to touch.

- **Sugar:** Avoid frequent snacking and juice in a bottle or sippy cup. The sugars in juice and simple carbohydrates (crackers, pretzels and cereals) provide a food source for the bacteria in the mouth.

- **Bacteria:** Usually young children pick up the cavity-causing bacteria from their family members. Sharing utensils and cups with children is discouraged. Caregivers should definitely not chew up foods for their infants or young children.

— Rachel Worley, MD, mother of Moses, 4 and Gabriella, 1



Eating healthy foods is good for children's teeth and overall health.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND PLAY

February is also American Heart Month. By exercising as little as 30 minutes per day, you can reduce your risk of heart disease—so get moving this month and all year! It's convenient, comfortable and safe to work out at home. It allows your children to see you being active, and that sets a good example for them. Try short activity sessions several times a day:

- Do housework yourself instead of hiring someone to do it.
- Work in the garden or mow the grass. Using a riding mower doesn't count! Rake leaves, prune, dig and pick up trash.
- Go out for a short walk before breakfast, after dinner or both! Start with 5–10 minutes and work up to 30 minutes.
- Walk or bike to the corner store instead of driving.
- When walking, pick up the pace from leisurely to brisk. Choose a hilly route. When watching TV, sit up instead of lying on the sofa. Or stretch.
- Stand up while talking on the telephone.
- Walk the dog.
- Park farther away at the shopping mall and walk the extra distance. Wear your walking shoes and sneak in an extra lap or two around the mall.
- Stretch to reach items in high places and squat or bend to look at items at floor level.

OTHER RESOURCES

- www.adha.org • www.heart.org • www.cdc.gov/family/kids

THE CHILDREN'S CENTER



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A service of Parrish Medical Center

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