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PARENT PLAYGROUND

RAISING RILEY



In This Edition...

Newsletter Introduction • Page 1

"What does it mean..." • Page 2

A Deeper Look • Page 3

Contact Us • Page 4

Newsletter Introduction

Did you know that February is National Children's Dental Health month? This month-long national health campaign brings together thousands of individuals to promote the benefits of good oral health in children, their caregivers, teachers, and many others. Several resources are available to learn more about oral health and its benefits. Along with that information, you might be wondering how to teach your children and keep the tears to a minimum. Keep reading to find out how to make oral health fun!



"What does it mean..."

ORAL HEALTH

Definition¹

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines oral health as "the health of the teeth, gums, and the entire oral-facial system that allows us to smile, speak, and chew." They have identified some of the most common disease that impact oral health come from cavities (tooth decay), gum (periodontal) disease, and oral cancer. Most of the time for children, you'll see cavities as the main issue.

Impacts of Oral Health²

There are several aspects of a healthy mouth contributing to a healthy body (physically, emotionally, mentally, etc.). An article written by the Pediatric Care Group, P.C. states "setting your children up with a strong oral health care foundation will keep it at the top of their health priority list for the entirety of their lives." Meaning, if you can get your kids to care about their oral health early in life, they will care about it the rest of their lives.

Did you know that tooth decay (or cavities) is the most common chronic childhood disease? Yeah! Around 20% of children (that's about 1 in every 5) have cavities between ages 5 and 11. Yikes! This is a big deal because if left untreated, cavities can cause eating and speaking problems later in life. Having cavities can also impact a child's self-esteem, causing issues with social and emotional development. With regular check-ups at the dentists office, you can do your part in catching cavities early. Sticking with a balanced diet is another way you can help your children fight cavities as they grow.

Reducing Fear of the Dentist³

Are you someone that is afraid or nervous when going to the dentist? I know I am, and I'm an adult! It can be a difficult visit for children as well. Having to go to an unfamiliar environment can cause lots of anxiety to flare. It might feel intrusive to have the dentist

be in your mouth. You've maybe heard horror stories from your friends about their most recent trip to the dentist's office. Root canals, teeth pulled, needles of numbing medicine so they can scrape your teeth and gums. Now imagine all of this from a child's perspective. How nerve-racking!

Here are some tips to help prepare your little one for their next check-up appointment:

- **Be positive!** The more positive and confident you are in talking about the dentist, the more at ease your child will feel going to the dentist.
- **Keep your explanations short and simple.** Kids need straight-forward answers. The more concrete you can be in your explanations, the easier it will be for them to picture their visit.
- **Don't bring up shots or possible pain.** While children do better when they know what's coming, they don't need to know that something might hurt them. There's no avoiding it. Dentist visits can come with needles and some pain. Usually it's bearable. To a child, pain is pain and it all hurts. That's not something they need to dwell on. You can help console them after they receive a shot or experience the pain.
- **Role-play visiting the office.** Again, this gives them a sense of what to expect. And it turns it into a game of guessing what's going to happen. They get to control the story when you role-play.
- **Read books or watch videos together about the dentist's office.** This is a great way to have your child feel prepared. While they might not have experienced a visit to the dentist office (or at least remember the last time they were there), reading a story about how it started, what happened in the middle, and how it ended is a great way to help them understand that while it's unfamiliar it doesn't mean they won't make it to the end just fine. They can do this!

**ORAL HEALTH IMPACTS YOUR OVERALL HEALTH -
PHYSICAL, MENTAL, & EMOTIONAL!**



A Deeper Look

ORAL HEALTH ACTIVITIES

Activities to make oral health fun⁴

- **Egg Carton Teeth** - use egg cartons (flipped upside-down), toothbrushes, toothpaste, and dental floss to practice flossing and brushing the egg carton teeth
- **Toothbrush Painting** - use heavy paper, different colored paint, and an old toothbrush to practice different brushing strokes (up & down, circular, and back & forth) with different colors for each motion
- **Playdough Flossing** - use an empty ice cube tray (flipped upside-down), pipe cleaners, and playdough plaque to practice flossing chunks of playdough plaque

Activities combining learning and oral health⁵

- **Toothpaste Letter Hunt / Sensory Bin** - use a toothbrush, kid-friendly tweezers, and shaving cream with food color to act as toothpaste and find letter beads throughout
- **Toothpaste Shapes** - use your shaving cream “toothpaste” and either fingers or a toothbrush to draw different shapes, numbers, and letters in the toothpaste
- **Teeth Playdough Tray** - use a sectioned tray/plate, plastic teeth, yellow beads (“cavities”), silver beads (“cavity caps” or “crowns”), green string or pipe cleaner (“floss”), red or pink playdough, and white playdough to create your mouth, all while talking to your children about cavities, caps/crowns, and the importance of brushing and flossing to prevent those from happening to them

Elmo teeth brushing song

- Check out this fun song to listen to while you brush your teeth!
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxMrtK-kYnE>

RESOURCES

- [https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/conditions/index.html#:~:text=Oral%20health%20refers%20to%20the,\)%20di%20sease%2C%20and%20oral%20cancer](https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/conditions/index.html#:~:text=Oral%20health%20refers%20to%20the,)%20di%20sease%2C%20and%20oral%20cancer)
- <https://pcgkids.com/the-importance-of-oral-health-care-for-children/>
- <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/oral-health/brush-oral-health/reducing-fear-dental-visits>
- <https://www.innovativepediatricdentistry.com/8-fun-dental-crafts-for-kids-to-celebrate-national-childrens-dental-health-month/>
- <https://pocketofpreschool.com/dental-health-themed-activities-and-centers/>

Upcoming Events

BE SURE TO CONTACT US TO REGISTER!

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
28	29	30	31	1 NEW Monthly StoryWalk Book	2	3 COS-P Session 2 'new participants welcome!' 9 AM - 11 AM
4	5	6 Game Night 'come and go' @ 4:30 - 6:30 PM	7	8	9	10 COS-P Session 3 'no new participants' 9 AM - 11 AM
11	12	13 Laundry Love Sud's Y'r Duds @ 6 PM - 9 PM	14 VALENTINE'S DAY!	15	16	17
18	19 PRESIDENT'S DAY! RR Offices Closed	20 RR Book Club 6 PM - 7 PM	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	1 NEW Monthly StoryWalk Book	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9

FEB

*****BONUS TIME*****

Contact us with an answer to this question to earn a free goodie for your little one!

What is one way you will help promote oral health this month with your entire family?

CONTACT US:

OFFICE PHONE:
(785) 776-4779 ext. 7663

EMAIL:
raisingriley@rileycountyks.gov

ONLINE:
www.raisingriley.com

SOCIAL MEDIA:
 @ Raising Riley / Riley County Health Department

@raisingrileykids