



ORAL HEALTH BYTES

A Newsletter For Local Oral Health Programs



From the Dental Director's Desk

Tooth decay is one of the most common childhood chronic diseases. Although preventable, disparities in the prevalence of tooth decay with respect to income, race and ethnicity, and parental education are profound. Daily toothbrushing with fluoridated toothpaste combined with a low-sugar diet will help reduce the risk of developing tooth decay.

Early education and childcare (EECC) programs are an important setting to implement a daily toothbrushing program for teaching children a lifelong healthy habit. Many professional and governmental organizations endorse supervised toothbrushing in early care programs. Promoting early professional care in primary care settings with the age-one dental visit should complement daily home care.

Through laws and regulations, Kansas, Massachusetts, and West Virginia support tooth brushing in EECC programs. The Office of Head Start has established a

standard ensuring all children with teeth are assisted by appropriate staff or volunteers, if available, in brushing their teeth once daily with toothpaste containing fluoride. In addition, there are resources that include protocols, education materials, and staff training. Local oral health programs should consider this effective strategy to promote oral health.

Jayanth Kumar, DDS, MPH State Dental Director
Office of Oral Health, Center for Healthy Communities
California Department of Public Health

Toothbrushing in Early Care and Elementary Classrooms

During the June PDM, we featured success stories from several LOHPs. Humboldt County's success story highlighted their Brush in a Box program, which was an expansion of the Head Start/Early Start mandated toothbrushing policy and procedure.



Toothbrushing at the table, or [circle brushing](#), provides children with a shared space to learn how to brush effectively and teachers with a more efficient and less messy approach to this daily routine. Sitting in a circle, children are given a paper cup and toothbrush with a pea-sized dab of fluoride toothpaste. Using a no-water or dry-brushing method, the children begin to brush their teeth. Toothbrushes are rinsed afterward to remove any residue and then stored upright to air dry.

Watch circle brushing in action: Steps for Toothbrushing at the Table: [Growing Healthy Smiles in Early Care and Education Programs | ECLKC \(.hhs.gov\)](#).

Humboldt County LOHP went a step further and brought Brush in a Box into elementary school classrooms, modifying the procedure to work for children in grades K-8th. All the instructions and supplies needed to start or improve a highly effective toothbrushing routine was provided in a box. It's also cost-effective: continuing such a program for one school year (180 days) for a classroom of 20 children would be approximately \$500. A small price to pay to help prevent the severe consequences of a child not receiving proper oral health care. Now that children have returned to in-person learning, brushing must also return, and toothbrushing at the table is a best practice recommended by the Office of Head Start and the California Department of Public Health, Office of Oral Health.

Additional resources for early care toothbrushing:

[No Water Toothbrushing | California Childcare Health Program \(ucsf.edu\)](https://www.ucsf.edu/childcare/brush-in-a-box)

[Good Oral Health Starts Early - HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org/)

[Activities for Early Learning: Circle Time | Cavity Free Kids](https://www.healthychildren.org/activities/early-learning/circle-time/)

[Best Tooth Brushing Songs for Kids - American Dental Association \(mouthhealthy.org\)](https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/t/tooth-brushing-songs)

[How to Get Your Kids to Brush Their Teeth - American Dental Association \(mouthhealthy.org\)](https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/t/tooth-brushing-songs)

[Dental Care | First 5 California](https://www.first5california.org/)

Fluoride

Anytime we talk about toothbrushing, we're also discussing fluoride. What is fluoride? How does it work? Is my water fluoridated? What about fluoride supplements? What about silver diamine fluoride? And finally, why is fluoride so hard to spell?



One Minute Grammar Clinic: The etymology of fluoride is based on the Latin “fluor,” which means flowing. Words with “ou” (rough, loud) are more common than words with “uo,” especially when the paired letters form just one syllable. And that’s why it’s hard to spell.

<https://ilikemyteeth.org>

[Fluoridation Facts \(ada.org\).](#)

[Understanding How Fluoride Helps Prevent and Repair Tooth Decay | ECLKC \(hhs.gov\).](#)

[My Water's Fluoride](#)

[Facilitating the Use of Fluoride Supplements | ECLKC \(hhs.gov\).](#)

[Understanding Use of Silver Diamine Fluoride | ECLKC \(hhs.gov\).](#)

First Five California Kit for New Parents: Free Resource



The First 5 California Kit for New Parents explains in plain language how parents can take care of their children from birth through age 5. The Kit contains the California Parent Guide, the What to Do When Your Child Gets Sick book, a book to read to babies/toddlers, a poison control brochure and magnet, and other resources. Topics include pregnancy, child development, childcare, early learning and school readiness, health (including vaccines), oral health, nutrition, child safety, and access to food, housing, and health care.

Available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean, the Kit has comprehensive oral health information: oral health during pregnancy, cleaning a baby's gums, brushing a toddler's teeth, preventing tooth decay, how to find a dentist, and how to access dental care, including information for Medi-Cal Dental and Smile, California.

How to Order a *Kit*

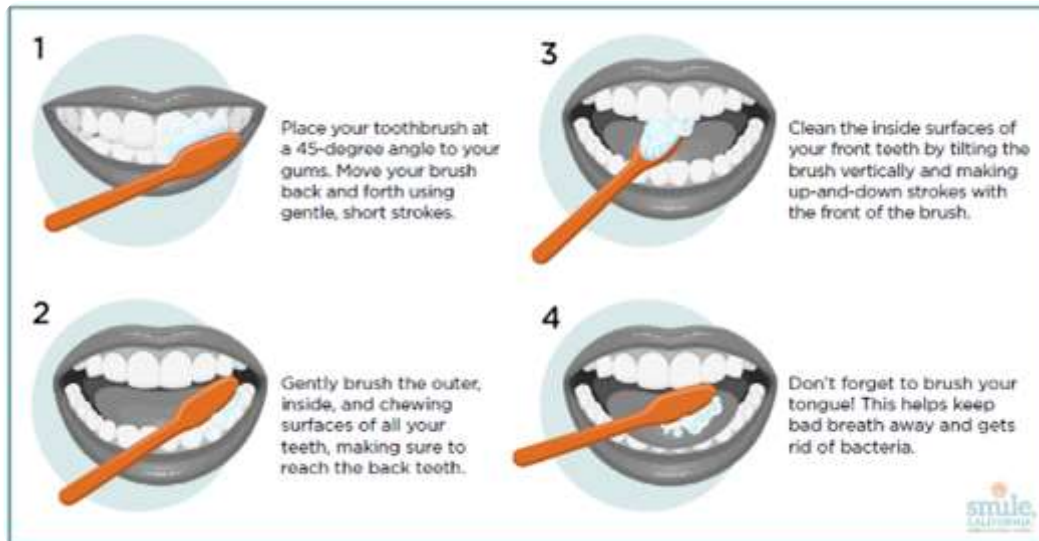
- Parents can order a free *Kit* by visiting the First 5 California website (one *Kit* per order): <https://first5parentingkits.com/>
- Providers have two methods to bulk-order free *Kits* for their programs:
 1. Contact the local First 5 county commission directly:
<https://ccfc.ca.gov/family/family.html#external>
 2. Email parentkit@first5.ca.gov to request a *Kit* ordering account.

For More Information

Contact Vernettia Syphax, First 5 California, at 916-263-1089 or vsyphax@ccfc.ca.gov.

Smile, California Resources

Keeping your teeth healthy is one of the best things you can do for your overall health. Brushing and flossing properly, along with regular dental check-ups, can help prevent tooth decay and gum disease.



To prevent cavities, you need to remove plaque, the transparent layer of bacteria that coats the teeth. The best way to do this is by brushing your teeth twice a day and flossing at least once a day.

The graphic shows the proper brushing technique.

Download and share the *Smile, California* resources linked below to help members in your community brush up on good dental care habits!

- [Brushing techniques and additional resources](#)
- [Clean Routine Fotonovela](#)
- [Toothy Tips for Parents](#)
- [Brochure for Caregivers](#)
- [Toothbrushing Calendar](#)
- [Oral Health and School Readiness | Smile California](#)

[Visit Smile, California for more information on how members in your community can care for their smile!](#)

Remember, good oral care routines are vital habits for everyone to have but homecare routines cannot take the place of a regular dental check-up! Remind your community that regular dental check-ups give dentists the consistent opportunity to:

- Identify and treat tooth decay
- Apply protective treatments like sealants and fluoride varnish
- Discover issues that could potentially not only cause pain but also impact one's self-confidence if left untreated

Dental check-ups are covered for Medi-Cal members. Members under the age of 21 can visit the dentist twice a year, and members over the age of 21 can visit the dentist once a year. Medi-Cal members can find a dentist in their area that's accepting new patients by visiting the [Find A Dentist](#) page or by calling the Medi-Cal Dental Telephone Service Center at (800) 322-6384.

COHTAC Resources

[American Academy of Pediatrics toothbrushing poster](#)
[Oral Health Education BSBF \(colgate.com\)](#)
[learningfactsheet.pdf \(mchoralhealth.org\)](#)
[How to Make Flossing and Brushing Fun for Kids at Home \(themightymouth.org\)](#)
[Water Fluoridation | California Oral Health Technical Assistance Center \(ucsf.edu\)](#)
[Elmo's Toothy Dance Awareness Campaign | California Oral Health Technical Assistance Center \(ucsf.edu\)](#)
[Sesame Street: Healthy Teeth, Healthy Me Brushy Brush Toothbrush song video](#)

Calendar of Events and Due Dates:

- Grant 2022-2027 begins July 1
- Final 2017- 2022 progress report due July 31
- Final 2017-2022 data form survey due July 31
- Close-out documents (QI, Sustainability, Communications plans) due July 31
- Final 2017-2022 invoice due September 30

OOH Team Spotlight: Ciara Hunt

Ciara Hunt is one of the newest additions to the OOH team. The youngest of 13 children and a Humboldt County native, Ciara grew up spending lots of time outdoors, appreciating the county's expansive and diverse landscape. After earning a degree in liberal studies with an emphasis in early childhood education, Ciara joined a nonprofit agency that ran Head Start/Early Start programs. There she provided teacher trainings, led parent workshops, and coordinated dental screenings and education sessions. She honed the agency's toothbrushing policy and procedures and trained staff to implement a safer, more effective toothbrushing routine in their programs. Ciara was recognized by the California

Association for the Education of Young Children for her outstanding work with children and families.



After gaining additional experience at a nonprofit in the Bay Area, Ciara moved back to Humboldt County, working briefly in the county Nutrition, Education, and Obesity Program before accepting the health education specialist position in the local oral health program. In 2020, she earned her master's in psychology with a specialization in child and adolescent development. Ciara enjoys spending time with her children, going to concerts with her partner, exploring nature, writing, and practicing yoga.

Want to develop a toothbrushing “brush in a box” program for your LOHP?
Contact Ciara at Ciara.Hunt@cdph.ca.gov.

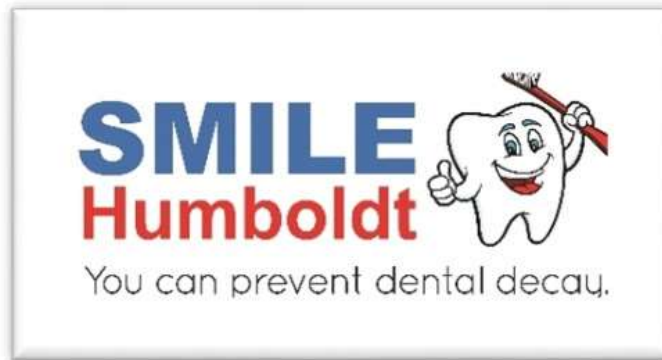
LOHP Spotlight: Humboldt County



Located in northwest California, Humboldt County is bordered on the west by the Pacific Ocean with 110 miles of coastline and contains more than 40 percent of all the remaining old growth redwoods. Native American tribal lands encompass approximately 95,000 acres, with eight federally recognized tribes. With a

population of roughly 133,500, Humboldt is considered a rural county. Rural areas tend to have less access to transportation and health care services and higher rates of substance use, adverse childhood experiences, and mental health issues, all of which can lead to poor oral health.

To offset these challenges, Humboldt County invested time and energy into multi-agency collaborations to help address health disparities. As an example, the local oral health program increased toothbrushing in early childhood education settings, school dental screenings, preventive education, and county-wide care coordination.



To learn more about Humboldt County, visit their website [Smile Humboldt](https://www.smilehumboldt.org/). They also have six videos and two dental care rap songs on YouTube. Yes, rap songs. Watch and listen here: [SMILE, Humboldt - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...).

Email DentalDirector@cdph.ca.gov to suggest future articles and provide feedback.

Design by Pang Vang. Content by Karen Jacoby.
