

COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM, INC.



OF WESTERN INDIANA

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Dear Head Start Parent:

Today your child learned why it is important to clean teeth and gums daily to remove plaque. Plaque is a sticky, colorless film of bacteria (germs) that constantly forms on the teeth. The bacteria make acids and other waste products that cause tooth decay and gum disease.

Because plaque forms every day, it must be cleaned off every day. If this is not done, it builds up and becomes more harmful. As you know, your child's baby teeth are very important and should be cleaned every day to keep them healthy. We will be making sure your child is brushing every day at the Head Start Center and will be encouraging him or her to brush at home as well.

You can help your child by making sure that toothbrushing is part of the daily routine. Also, your own example of daily brushing and flossing would be another way to teach your child about the importance of cleaning teeth. If you have babies or young children who feed from a baby bottle, please be sure to read the page about Nursing Bottle Mouth that was sent with this letter.

Sincerely,

Lori L. Brewer, LPN

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Head Start Health Services Specialist

Dental #2
HS-22 2/11

NURSING BOTTLE MOUTH

Sometimes babies or young children who drink from a baby bottle develop a condition called "Nursing Bottle Mouth." Nursing bottle mouth is a dental condition that can destroy the teeth of an infant or young child. The teeth most likely to be damaged are the upper front teeth, the ones that can make such a difference in your child's smile. But other teeth may also be affected by this condition.

Nursing bottle mouth is caused when liquids such as milk, formulas, juices, or sweet drinks pool around a child's teeth for long periods of time. This can lead to decay. That is why giving your child a bottle containing these liquids many times a day, as a pacifier, isn't a good idea. You also should not allow your child to fall asleep with a bottle during naps or at night, or else your child's teeth can be seriously harmed.

You can prevent this from happening to your child's teeth by protecting them in the following ways:

- * After each bottle feeding, wipe the child's teeth and gums with a damp washcloth or gauze pad, to remove plaque.
- * Never allow your child to fall asleep with a bottle containing milk, formula, sweetened liquids, or fruit juices.
- * If your child needs a comforter between regular feedings, at night, or during naps, fill a nursing bottle with cool water or give the child a clean pacifier recommended by your dentist. (Never give your child a pacifier dipped in any sweet liquid.)
- * Avoid filling your child's nursing bottle with liquids such as sugar water, sweetened gelatin, and soft drinks.