



Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child will be participating in a research-based child oral health program called CATCH Healthy Smiles at school. This program is designed for elementary school students using a coordinated approach to improve children's oral health.

Tooth decay (caries) is the **most common** childhood disease. In the U.S., about 56% of children aged 6-8 have dental caries in a primary or permanent tooth. In Texas, 68% of children aged 6-8 have untreated dental caries. Children with dental health issues are nearly 3 times more likely to miss school.

You can prevent tooth decay if you:

- Brush 2x a day for 2 minutes with a soft, small toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste
- Floss between teeth once a day
- Visit the dentist for cleanings 2 times a year
- Choose water to drink. Avoid soda, sports drinks, flavored milk, iced tea, and juice
- Choose fresh crunchy vegetables and fruits, cheese, and lean meats to snack on instead of processed snacks like chips, candy, and cookies
- Limit snacking throughout the day: The more times your child eats throughout the day, the more acid attacks occur on their teeth

Tips for successful at-home oral care:

- **Brush and floss together!** Model flossing and brushing for your child by getting eye-level with them, showing them how much toothpaste to use and how to reach all of the teeth. Help them adjust the toothbrush and manipulate the floss as needed to reach top and back teeth.
- **Make it fun!** Use music or a timer to ensure your child brushes for 2 minutes. Let your child pick the music or operate the timer.
- **Praise them!** Boost your child's brushing confidence by giving them positive praise and encouragement while brushing.
- **Help them!** Before or after your child brushes, do a once-over with the toothbrush for them to help reach any spots they may have missed.
- **Beat the morning rush!** Keep a set of toothbrushes and toothpaste by the kitchen sink to make morning brushing easier.
- **Rinse when unable to brush!** After eating, ensure students at least swish their mouth with water if brushing is not possible.

CATCH Healthy Smiles is designed to improve the oral health of students by teaching and encouraging proper tooth brushing and flossing, a nutritious diet and regular visits to a dentist. CATCH Healthy Smiles contains 8 interactive TEKS-aligned lessons with coordinating extension activities and PE supplemental activities, plus a parent resource page and home-connection activities.

The CATCH Healthy Smiles program will start soon at your child's school. Be sure to ask your child what



he or she is learning in the program. As a parent/guardian, you have a lot of influence over your child's oral health.

The parent information page at <https://catch.org/lessons/632> contains fact sheets, web links, and videos designed to help you take care of your child's teeth.

CATCH Healthy Smiles is part of the CATCH healthy nutrition and physical activity programs. To learn more about CATCH programs, materials, and training, visit the CATCH Global Foundation website (<http://catchinfo.org/>).

We hope that you and your family will find the program helpful. Please contact healthysmiles@catch.org if you have any questions about the program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shreela". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Shreela. V. Sharma, PhD, RD, LD