

Module 1: “Tiny Teeth Do Big Jobs!” 10-15 minutes

Key Message

Teeth are important for eating, talking and having a nice smile.

Student goals

Upon completing this module students will better understand:

- Why people have teeth.
- How we use our teeth.
- How many sets of teeth people get.

Module Topics (with discussion points and questions)

1. *Why we need teeth.* Who can name something that we do with our teeth? [Discuss children’s suggestions, which may include talking, eating or chewing, smiling, singing. Have children talk, chew, and smile and frown at each other.] Today we are going to talk about a very important part of our bodies — our teeth. Teeth help us do many things.
2. *How teeth help us do things better.* We have had some good suggestions. But how do our teeth help us do these things? How do our teeth help us eat? [We can chew our food into little pieces. This keeps us from choking or getting a stomach ache.]

ACTIVITY #1: What about talking? Is it easy to talk without using your teeth? Let’s try it. Say “thirty-three thirsty thieves” without letting your tongue touch your teeth... That was very hard to do! Our teeth have the important job of helping our lips and tongue make sounds properly. I have another question. Do you think you need your teeth to frown? Let’s test it out. Turn to your neighbor and give a great big smile... Good. Now, give your neighbor a very unhappy frown... H-m-m-m. I guess you don’t need teeth to frown! But since most of you laugh and smile a lot, your teeth are very important!

So now we know that:

**Our teeth are important because they help us talk properly,
chew our food and give us beautiful smiles!**

3. *Characteristics of teeth.* What are your teeth like? Are they soft or hard? Do they have sharp edges or are they round like a ball? Are they strong or do they break easily? [Discuss answers.] So, our teeth are hard, have some sharp or cutting edges, and are strong. What would happen if our teeth were soft and weak? [Couldn’t chew; they might break; it would be hard to talk.]

4. *The number and purpose of baby (primary) teeth.* When did you get your teeth? [When you were a baby.] Why do babies need teeth? [To learn how to talk and so that they can eat solid food.] Now I have a really hard question. How many baby teeth do children get? Any guesses?

ACTIVITY #2: Primary Tooth Development. Here is a picture that shows all the teeth in the top of your mouth and in the bottom. Let's count them together out loud... Twenty teeth! That's a lot. By the time children are three or four years old, they have 20 teeth.

Children get 20 teeth by the time they are 3 or 4 years old.

5. *Sets of teeth in a lifetime.* Will you have these 20 teeth your whole life? [No.] What happens to your teeth when you get to be 5, 6 or 7 years old? [Your teeth start to come out.] Yes, your baby teeth start to come out. Why do you lose your baby teeth? [As children get bigger they need bigger, stronger teeth.] (First grade teachers may want to discuss losing primary teeth and getting permanent teeth in more detail. Visit www.adacatalog.org for supplemental materials.)

ACTIVITY #3: Look at the size and number of teeth in the photo of the smiling adult and baby. Ask children to imagine all those big teeth in the baby's little mouth. (Use to illustrate why we need baby teeth.) Talk about things that babies cannot do because they don't have many teeth.

6. *Permanent teeth.* When you get older, your 20 baby teeth will be replaced by 32 permanent teeth. Your permanent teeth are bigger and stronger than your baby teeth. After all, they are made to last the rest of your life!

People get two sets of teeth during their life: baby teeth (or primary teeth) and adult teeth (or permanent teeth).

Summary: *Teeth are a special part of our body and do several very important jobs throughout our lives.*



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