

Module 2: “Keeping Teeth Bright and Healthy” approximate time: 10 minutes

Key Message

Cleaning our teeth helps keep them strong and healthy.

Student goals

Upon completing this module students should know:

- That having clean teeth is an important part of having a clean body.
- Basic brushing techniques.
- What plaque is.
- What a cavity is.
- Why eating nutritious foods is important for our teeth.

Module Topics (with discussion points and questions)

1. *Keeping our bodies and teeth clean.* What are some of the things you do to keep yourself clean? [bathe, wash hair, wash clothes.] Why is it important to have clean hands, and to take a bath, and to wash our clothes? [So you don't get sick; so you look and smell nice.] How do you feel when you are clean? [Skin smells good, hands don't feel sticky, etc.] Can someone be really clean if their mouth and teeth are not clean? [No.] Why not? [Because a clean mouth feels nicer, your breath smells nice, etc.]

Clean teeth and mouth are parts of a clean body.

2. *Brushing teeth.* What can you do to keep your teeth clean and healthy? [Brush your teeth.] How many of you brush your teeth? Great! How often should you brush your teeth? [Twice a day.] What do you put on your toothbrush? Yes, toothpaste. Why do you use toothpaste? [Cleans better than just water, gets the food off your teeth, makes your teeth stronger, makes your mouth taste good.] Those are all good answers. Does anyone know how much toothpaste you should put on your toothbrush? [Listen to a few suggestions.] You might be surprised, but you only need a very little bit of toothpaste on your toothbrush — about the size of a little green pea. [Demonstrate putting a pea-sized amount of toothpaste on a toothbrush.] I have a very important question. When you are brushing your teeth, what do you do with the toothpaste in your mouth? Yes. Spit out all the toothpaste! Don't swallow it. Toothpaste is for cleaning your teeth, not your stomach!

**Brush twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.
Always spit out all the toothpaste.**

3. *Brushing techniques.* Your mom, dad or another grown-up may help you brush your teeth, or maybe your dentist showed you how to brush. Move the brush back and forth gently in short strokes. Brush the top, front, and back sides of each tooth.

[NOTE: Ideally, an adult will brush and floss a child's teeth until he or she is at least 6 years old. By age 6 or 7, children should be able to brush their own teeth twice a day – with supervision until about age 10 or 11, to make sure they are doing a thorough job. Since adults at home do not always supervise tooth brushing, you might want to suggest to your class that they ask a grown-up to watch them brush, so they can show how well they do it. Flossing demands more manual dexterity than very young children have, and children are not usually able to floss well until they are age 10 or 11, and even then they should be supervised.]

ACTIVITY #4: Here is a picture of one good way to brush your teeth. It says...
(Show *How to Brush* and read instructions. Ask for questions and comments.)

**Move the brush back and forth gently in short strokes.
Brush the top, front and back sides of each tooth.**

4. *Toothbrushes.* What kind of toothbrush do you use? [Get several answers.] I'm going to ask you a question and give you four answers. You tell me which answer you think is the right one. [Pass around several different examples of new toothbrushes, or show *Adult and Child-size Toothbrushes*.] Here's the question:

What kind of toothbrush would be easiest for you to use?

- a) A very big one
- b) One with a fancy handle
- c) A small, child-size toothbrush that is easy to hold
- d) A purple one

You're so smart! You should use a small, child-size toothbrush that is easy to hold.

Use a child-size toothbrush that is easy to hold.

ACTIVITY #6: Show *Old and New Toothbrushes*. Have the children identify the one that looks new.

**Get a new toothbrush when the bristles
are bent and worn out.**

5. *What plaque is.* When you brush your teeth at night, they feel clean and your mouth tastes good, right? Well, if you don't brush your teeth before going to bed, how does your mouth feel when you wake up in the morning? [Tastes bad, smells bad, teeth feel sticky.] That is because there is something else that gets on your teeth besides the food you eat. It's called plaque. Can you say "plaque"? Although you can't see it, plaque is a sticky film that is forming on your teeth all the time.

Plaque is a sticky, clear film that forms on your teeth all the time.

6. *How plaque contributes to cavities.* Plaque is bad for your teeth because it contains germs. The germs in the plaque can hurt your teeth by helping to make a little hole called a cavity. What do you think happens if you take a nice strong tooth and put holes in it? [It isn't as strong any more.] Right. The tooth gets weaker. Plaque and cavities make our teeth weaker. That's why it is so important to brush all the plaque off of our teeth. How many times a day should you brush? Yes! Two times — in the morning and before going to bed at night are good times to brush.

7. *Good nutrition.* There is another way we can help keep our teeth clean and healthy. That is by eating and drinking healthy foods. The foods we eat are just as important for keeping our teeth healthy as they are for keeping our bodies healthy. Eating a mix of healthy foods for breakfast, lunch and dinner is the best way to keep your teeth and whole body in good shape. If you are hungry and need a snack, choose foods like fruit, low-fat cheese, low-fat yogurt, or raw vegetables. If you are thirsty, have a glass of water or low-fat milk. Don't drink too much sugary soda or eat too many sweets. If you have some sweets, try to eat them with your meals.

ACTIVITY #7: Show illustrations or plastic models of nutritious foods and beverages, or cut pictures of them from magazines. If your class is familiar with the Food Pyramid, or if you have taught about proper nutrition, you can use it to review good choices. (Visit www.mypyramid.gov for more information.)

**Eating healthy foods helps keep your teeth and body healthy.
Don't eat or drink too many sweets. If you want sweets,
eat or drink them with your meals.**

Now we know how important it is to keep our teeth clean. We should brush two times a day to keep our teeth clean and remove plaque, and eat healthy foods.

Summary: *Keeping our teeth clean and eating healthy foods helps teeth stay healthy.*



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