

Module 2: “Extra Protection for Terrific Teeth”

approximate time: 10 minutes

Key Message

In addition to good oral hygiene and regular dental visits, sealants, mouthguards and good health habits can help teeth last a lifetime.

Student goals

Upon completing this module students should be aware of additional ways that teeth can be protected and kept healthy:

- What dental sealants are, and how they protect teeth from cavities.
- Why wearing mouthguards during active sports is important.
- Recognizing and eliminating behaviors that can harm their teeth.

Module Topics (with discussion points and questions)

1. *Dental sealants.* In addition to keeping your teeth clean, eating nutritious foods and visiting your dentist regularly, there are several other ways you can help your teeth last a lifetime. Does anyone know what dental sealants are? [Some children may have already had sealants applied to their teeth and may be able to explain the process to the class.] After your permanent molars have come in — the large adult teeth toward the back of your mouth — your dentist can coat them with a special dental plastic that seals out decay. Applying sealants is quick, easy and painless. Sealants can last for several years. How many of you have had sealants applied to your permanent teeth? Sealants are additional protection from decay that many of your parents didn't have. When your parents were children, getting cavities was much more common than it is today. This doesn't mean that you can stop caring for your teeth. You still need to brush and floss every day! Sealants are added protection.

ACTIVITY #7: Sealant Application. Here is a picture of a dental sealant being applied to a tooth. [If time permits, discuss students' experiences with sealants.]

Dental sealants are a special plastic coating that protect teeth from decay.

ACTIVITY #8: Let's do another experiment, this time to see if a plastic coating can protect our pretend tooth from the acid in vinegar. (Repeat Tums® acid test, this time to show the effectiveness of sealants. Wrap one Tums® in plastic wrap and seal with transparent tape, leaving the other unwrapped. Place each in the bottom of a paper cup. Cover both with vinegar. Wait five minutes and pour off the liquid. Unwrap the plastic from the Tums® tablet. The plastic has protected the "tooth" from the acid.) [You may need to divide your class into 2 groups so that all the children can see. If possible, recruit another adult to assist with the demonstrations.]

2. *Mouthguards.* There is something else you can do to protect your teeth, but this is used to help protect your teeth from getting broken or knocked out. Does anyone know what I'm thinking of? I'll give you a hint. You use it for active sports. [Mouthguard.] That's right! A mouthguard. How many of you have ever worn a mouthguard? A mouthguard is a piece of soft, molded plastic that covers your upper teeth. Your dentist can make one that fits your teeth exactly, or you can buy an unshaped mouthguard at the store that can be softened in boiling water and then shaped to fit over your teeth.

ACTIVITY #9: Mouthguard. Here is a picture of a mouthguard. Can someone explain to the class how it fits on the teeth?

Why is it so important to use a mouthguard? [Because if you lose your permanent teeth, new ones will not grow in to replace them.] Do you know anyone who has had teeth knocked out during sports? Will those teeth ever grow back? Wearing a mouthguard is smart even if you don't really want to wear it.

Let's list all the sports and activities that we can think of where your teeth and mouth might be injured. (Remember to include non-team sports such as skateboarding, gymnastics, and rollerblading.)

Mouthguards protect teeth from injury and should be used during all active sports.

Your dentist can make a custom mouthguard, or a self-fitted mouthguard can be purchased at a store.

3. *Behaviors that can hurt teeth.* Is there anything else you can do to protect those priceless treasures in your mouth? Sometimes NOT doing certain things is just as important as the positive things you do. Avoiding bad habits and unhealthy activities is important too. Can anyone name something you might do that would injure your teeth or the health of your mouth? [Write suggestions on chalkboard.]

4. *Chewing on hard objects.* What about chewing on hard objects? Chewing on ice cubes, pencils and pens, or even hard candy can chip or crack your teeth. Even though your teeth are made to last a lifetime, they are made for chewing food only!

**Don't chew on hard objects like pencils,
ice cubes or hard candy.**

5. *Tobacco.* There is another bad habit that is very dangerous, not only for your teeth, but for your mouth and entire body: using tobacco products. Tobacco is bad for your total health. All tobacco — not just cigarettes and cigars. Smokeless tobacco, also called chew, can cause mouth, tongue and lip cancer, and is sometimes more addictive than cigarettes. Tobacco products also stain your teeth and cause gum disease and tooth loss. AND – tobacco products cost a lot of money! Bottom line: There is nothing good to say about tobacco products. Never starting is your best defense against all the health problems related to tobacco.

Tobacco products can cause gum disease, tooth loss and cancer. BE SMART; DON'T START! AND SAVE MONEY, TOO!

We have learned a lot about our teeth today and how to take good care of them.

1. Taking good care of our teeth is something that each of us can do.
2. Your permanent teeth are meant to last a lifetime.
3. Special activities and conditions require extra “tooth attention.”

Summary: *Kids, parents and their dentist can work together to provide extra protection for precious teeth.*

ACTIVITY #10: Have students work individually or in pairs to complete the activity sheet *Teeth to Treasure! Word Search* or *Teeth to Treasure! Word Search Challenge* (based on students' ability levels or time allowed). [You may wish to have copies of *Permanent Tooth Development* and *Tooth Anatomy* available as a reference.]



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