

Module 3: “YOU have the Power!”

approximate time: 15 minutes

Key Message

A healthy mouth and teeth are important parts of a healthy body. There are many things that children can do to keep their teeth clean, strong and healthy.

Student goals

Upon completing this module students should be aware of four steps for good oral health:

- Brush with fluoride toothpaste twice each day. Spit out all the toothpaste!
- Floss once a day with a grown-up’s help.
- Eat and drink nutritious foods and beverages and limit snacks.
- Visit their dentist regularly.

Module Topics (with discussion points and questions)

1. *Feeling healthy.* How do you feel when you are healthy? [List things: feel strong, have lots of energy, feel happy, etc.] Can someone really be healthy if their mouth and teeth are not healthy? [No.] Why not? [Because a clean mouth feels nicer, your breath smells nice, etc.]

Healthy teeth and mouth are part of a healthy body.

2. *Keeping teeth healthy.* What can you do to fight plaque and help keep your teeth healthy? [List answers, which may include brushing, visiting the dentist, good food and drink choices and flossing.] Let’s talk about some of these.

3. *Proper brushing.* 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 water, gets the food and plaque off your teeth, makes your breath smell good, makes your mouth taste good.] Those are all good answers. There is also something very important in most toothpastes that helps strengthen your teeth. Does anyone know what it is called? It’s “fluoride.” [Write “fluoride” on chalkboard.] Fluoride prevents cavities by strengthening and protecting the teeth from acid. By the way, after you’ve brushed your teeth, 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.
Fluoride prevents cavities by strengthening and
protecting tooth enamel.
Always spit out all the toothpaste!**

Did your dentist, or the hygienist in your dentist's office, show you how to brush your teeth? 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 #3: 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 a couple of toothbrushes in adult and child sizes, or show *Adult and Child-size Toothbrushes.*) Here's the question:

What kind of toothbrush would be easiest for you use?

- a) The biggest one you can find
- b) One with a fancy handle
- c) A child-size toothbrush that is easy to hold
- d) A purple one

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

**Use a toothbrush that has soft bristles and is
comfortable to use.**

ACTIVITY #4: (Show *Old and New Toothbrushes* and discuss when to get a new toothbrush.) Here are two toothbrushes. Which one looks new? How can you tell if you need a new toothbrush? [If the bristles are bent or broken.] Yes, you should get a new toothbrush when the bristles are bent and worn out.

Replace your toothbrush when the bristles are bent and worn out.

5. *Flossing.* Is there anything else we can do to clean our teeth? [Use floss.] Who knows what dental floss is? [Looks like string or thread.] Dental floss is a special kind of string for cleaning between your teeth. How many of you floss your teeth? Cleaning between your teeth is just as important as brushing. Do you know WHY? [Flossing helps remove bits of food and plaque from between the teeth where your toothbrush can't reach. It helps keep your teeth and gums healthy.] Flossing is not as easy for children to do as brushing, so you should ask your parents or another grown-up to help you floss. You should floss your teeth very gently, once a day.

Floss your teeth very gently, once a day, with a grown-up's help.

ACTIVITY #5: Show floss and explain the technique used in *How to Floss*. Ask for a student volunteer, and demonstrate the following flossing technique using yarn: The child holds hands together with fingers straight up and tight against each other. These are the teeth. Use the yarn to floss between the student's fingers. Arrange students in pairs, give each pair a length of yarn, and allow them time to practice "flossing" each other's fingers. (One variation of this is to smear tempera paint between the fingers of the child representing the teeth, and then use the yarn to "floss." In this way, the children will actually see the "floss" cleaning between the teeth.)

5. *Good nutrition.* Brushing and flossing are very important ways to keep teeth clean and healthy, but there are a few more things that each of us can do. Any ideas? I'll give you two hints: It has to do with plaque and germs and ACID. It also has to do with keeping the rest of your body healthy. Yes. The foods we eat and the beverages we drink are very important for keeping our teeth healthy. So let's talk about food.

ACTIVITY #8: Nutritious Foods. Does anyone know (remember) the food groups? [List on board.] Eating a mix of foods from these groups for breakfast, lunch and dinner is the best way to keep your teeth and whole body in good shape. [Discuss healthy eating for a few minutes.] (Visit www.choosemyplate.gov for resources.)

But what about snacks, soda pop, and sweets? [Get opinions.] Who remembers what happens in our mouths after we eat? Yes, plaque and sugar mix to form acid. Then the acid attacks our teeth. The more often we eat snacks and drink sugary liquids, the more acid attacks we have. But that doesn't mean that all snacks are bad for you. Sometimes growing children need to eat between meals. If you are hungry and need a snack, choose nutritious foods like fruit, low-fat cheese, low-fat yogurt or raw vegetables. Save the sweets to eat and drink with your meals. A full meal produces lots of saliva in your mouth that helps wash away the acids from your teeth.

**Eating a nutritious mix of foods from the food groups is the best way to keep your teeth and body healthy.
If you have sweets, eat or drink them with your meals.
If you snack, eat nutritious foods.**

What about chewing gum? [Get opinions.] Chewing gum immediately after a meal or snack is okay as long as the gum is sugarless. In fact, sugar-free gum makes your mouth produce more water, called saliva, which can help rinse the acid off your teeth. Of course, if your parents don't like you chewing gum, then you shouldn't, and we never chew gum in school. And — don't forget — throw your gum away in a trash can when you are finished!

Chewing sugarless gum increases saliva and helps wash out food and acid.

6. *Protect your teeth!* Another way to keep your teeth in good shape is NOT to chew on hard things — like ice cubes, pencils, or hard candy. Your teeth are strong, but it is possible to crack or chip them. It's a good habit to keep things out of your mouth that don't belong there!

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

7. *Dental visits.* So now we know four important ways to take care of our teeth — brushing, flossing, eating nutritious foods and not chewing on hard objects. There is one more very important thing we should all do to keep our teeth healthy. Who can tell me what it is? Yes! Visit your dentist regularly. Your dentist will tell you when your next visit should be. What are some of the ways the dentist helps you take care of your teeth? [Checks your teeth to see if they are healthy. Tells you how to take good care of your teeth. Fixes cavities and repairs teeth.] Great! [If time allows, discuss the children's experiences at the dentist's office.]

Visit your dentist regularly.

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

1. Our teeth are important.
2. Healthy teeth are part of a healthy body.
3. Taking good care of our teeth is something that each of us can do.

Summary: *Healthy teeth can last a lifetime if they are cared for properly.*

ACTIVITY #9: Have students work individually or in pairs to complete the activity sheets *A-MAZE-ing Message* and *Something's Missing*.



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