

## concept

Introduce children to the benefits of keeping their teeth healthy through smart food choices, proper brushing, and flossing.

# Healthy Smiles

## goals

1. Children understand the importance of taking care of their teeth through proper dental hygiene and healthy eating.
2. Children demonstrate the correct way to brush and floss their teeth.
3. Children recognize foods that are good for their teeth and foods that are bad for their teeth.

## objectives

1. Children relate the importance of why they have teeth.
2. Children express what foods help keep their teeth healthy.
3. Children demonstrate how to brush and floss their teeth.

## activities

**1** Ask the children questions to get them thinking about their teeth. You can say, "Why do you think we have teeth? Raise your hand if you know the answer."

Allow the children an opportunity to respond. Praise them if they respond with answers like eating, chewing, talking, and smiling. Then say, "Yes, we need our teeth to eat. Our teeth chop the food in our mouth into smaller pieces so we can swallow it."

Ask, "Do you think we really need teeth to talk?"

Wait to see if children understand or respond to why teeth are needed for talking. Ask the children, "Can you say, 33 thumbs?"

Wait until all of the children have had an opportunity to say 33 thumbs. Then ask, "Did you feel how your tongue pressed on the back of your teeth? How many of you used your teeth to make the 'th' sound? Teeth help us say certain words better. Try saying it again and feel how your teeth help your tongue say 33 thumbs!"

Say, "We know we need teeth to eat and to talk, so how can we make sure we keep our teeth healthy?">>>



### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Dairy Foods (included)
- Healthy Foods with Happy Tooth (included)
- Unhealthy Foods with Sad Tooth (included)
- *Brush Your Teeth Please*, by Leslie McGuire
- Child-size soft bristle toothbrushes (1 for each child and teacher—see references for suggestions on obtaining toothbrushes)
- Plastic sandwich bag (1 for each child)
- Permanent marker for teacher
- Teeth template (included)
- Non-toxic glue stick or tape for teacher
- 8½" x 11" piece of cardboard or heavy stock paper (1 for each pair of children)
- 6–8 inch piece of yarn (1 for each child)

>>> Allow time for the children to respond. Then say, "Some foods can help make our teeth strong. Raise your hand if you know what type of food can make our teeth strong?"

Wait for a response and then hold up the *Dairy Foods* handout (included) that includes illustrations of milk, cheese, and yogurt. Point to the milk first and say, "Milk makes our teeth strong!"

Continue by pointing to the other items on the handout and say, "Yogurt and cheese also help make our teeth strong."

**2** Say, "Did you know that some foods can help clean our teeth too? Raise your hand if you know of foods that can help clean our teeth?"

Allow time for the children to respond. Hold up the *Healthy Foods* handout (included) and say, "Foods like apples, carrots, cucumbers, and other crunchy fruits and vegetables can help clean our teeth."

Flip the handout over to the *Happy Tooth* and ask "How many of you want happy teeth?"

Allow time for the children to respond. Say, "When we eat some of these crunchy fruits and vegetables we are helping to clean our teeth."

Continue by holding up the *Unhealthy Foods* handout (included) and say, "These foods are not good for our teeth and can cause us to have cavities. Do any of you know what a cavity is?"

Allow the children time to answer or guess. "A cavity is a small hole in a tooth. It doesn't go all the way through but is kind of like a tiny cave."

Flip over the *Unhealthy Foods* handout to show the *Sad Tooth* and say, "When we eat these unhealthy foods we make our teeth sad. We want happy healthy teeth!"

While saying this, show them the *Happy Tooth* on the back of the *Healthy Foods* handout.

**3** Next ask, "How many of you brush your teeth?"

Encourage their responses by saying "good job" and "that's great." You can ask, "Why do we brush our teeth?"

Allow enough time for the children to answer and then say, "We brush our teeth every day to keep them clean. When we eat, germs and very small pieces of food stay on our teeth. When we brush we keep our teeth clean and healthy!"

**4** In an animated voice read the book *Brush Your Teeth Please*. Encourage the children to follow along by demonstrating what the characters of the book are doing. Ask the children what kinds of animals have teeth and what kinds don't.

**5** Provide each child a soft-bristle toothbrush to go over the correct way to brush their teeth. Say, "Be sure to brush every tooth. Make sure to brush the top teeth downwards and bottom teeth upwards. Watch me!"

Demonstrate brushing your teeth. Then say, "Remember to brush the front, back, inside, and outside of your teeth!"

Encourage the children to brush gently so they don't hurt their gums (explain where their gums are if they don't know). After going over how to correctly brush, you can hand out plastic sandwich bags for each child to store their toothbrush in (use a permanent marker to write the children's names on the bags).

**6** Prior to the flossing activity, cut out the teeth from the *Teeth* template provided and glue or tape the teeth onto pieces of cardboard. If cardboard is unavailable, then a heavy-stock paper can be used. Pair the children up so that everyone has a partner.

Create enough teeth so that each pair of children can have one set. Then provide each pair of children with a 6–8 inch piece of yarn. Ask for a volunteer from the class to help you clean your set of teeth. The volunteer will hold up the teeth while you demonstrate cleaning to the rest of the children. While “flossing” with the yarn, say, “Gently floss in between each tooth.”

Ask each child to practice flossing on the teeth held by their partner. After the first half of the children have practiced flossing, have them switch with their partner so that the other children can practice as well. Then explain, “The toothbrush doesn’t always get all the food and germs from in between our teeth. Flossing helps us clean food and germs from in between our teeth.”

**7** After the flossing activity, ask the children to stand up. Say, “Let’s pretend we are the bristles on top of a toothbrush. Let’s brush the top of our teeth by moving forward.”

Take a step forward and instruct the children to follow. Then say, “Now let’s brush the bottom of our teeth by moving backwards. Now let’s all move front and back. Can everyone sway their arms above their heads? Let’s sway our arms back and forth! This is how our toothbrush moves in our mouths when we brush our teeth.”

Instruct the children to continue moving while singing “Brush Your Teeth” to the tune of “Jingle Bells.”

“Brush your teeth,  
Brush your teeth,  
Give your teeth a treat.  
Brush up and down and all around,  
To keep them clean and neat!  
Brush them once,  
Brush them twice,  
Brush three times a day.  
Brush up and down and all around,  
Keep cavities away!”

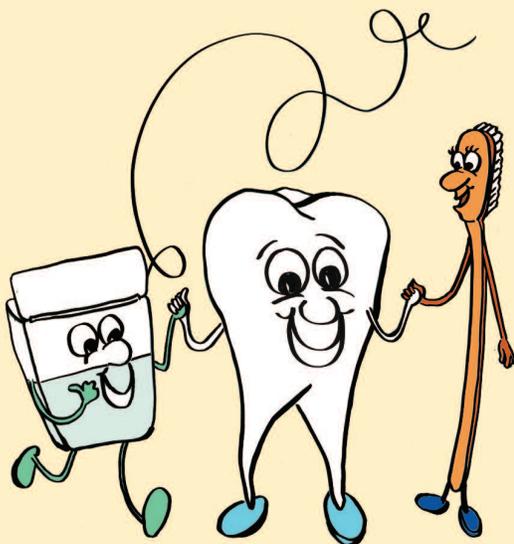
Say, “I think you all have beautiful and healthy smiles! We all know how important it is to eat healthy foods, brush, and floss our teeth every day!”

**Remember to make copies of the parent letter with the take-home activity sheet printed on the reverse side to send home with each child. The community fact sheet is also included for you to copy and display at your center or distribute as appropriate.**

## concept

Introduce children to the benefits of keeping their teeth healthy through smart food choices, proper brushing, and flossing.

# Healthy Smiles



## goals

1. Children understand the importance of taking care of their teeth through proper dental hygiene and healthy eating.
2. Children demonstrate the correct way to brush and floss their teeth.
3. Children recognize foods that are good for their teeth and foods that are bad for their teeth.

## objectives

1. Children indicate the importance of brushing and flossing their teeth.
2. Children recognize what foods help to keep their teeth healthy and strong.
3. Children demonstrate how to properly brush and floss their teeth.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- *Healthy Foods with Happy Tooth* (included)
- *Unhealthy Foods with Sad Tooth* (included)
- *Does a Lion Brush?* by Fred Ehrlich
- *Healthy Smiles* handout (included)
- *Primary Tooth Development* diagram (included)
- Child-size soft bristle toothbrushes (1 for each child and teacher—see references for suggestions on obtaining toothbrushes)
- Plastic sandwich bag (1 for each child)
- Permanent marker for teacher
- *Teeth* template (included)
- Non-toxic glue stick or tape for teacher
- 8½" x 11" piece of cardboard or heavy stock paper (1 for each pair of children)
- 6–8 inch piece of yarn (1 for each child)

## activities

**1** Say, "Today we are going to talk about a very important part of our bodies—our teeth. Teeth help us do many things."

Ask the children questions to get them thinking about their teeth, such as, "Who can name something that we do with our teeth?"

Discuss the childrens' answers which may include eating, chewing, talking and smiling. Have the children demonstrate each of the actions. For example, how do our teeth help us eat? Encourage and reinforce their responses by saying, "good job" and "that's great!" Continue by saying, "We chew our food into little pieces. This helps us use the food for energy."

**2** Continue by asking, "Did you know that some foods can help clean our teeth too? Raise your hand if you know of foods that can help clean our teeth?"

Hold up the *Healthy Foods* handout (included) and say, "Foods like apples, carrots, cucumbers and other crunchy fruits and vegetables can help clean our teeth.">>>

# Healthy Smiles

>>> Flip the handout over to the *Happy Tooth* and ask, "How many of you want happy teeth?"

Allow time for the children to respond. Say, "When we eat some of these crunchy fruits and vegetables we are helping to clean our teeth."

Continue by holding up the *Unhealthy Foods* and say, "These foods are not good for our teeth and can cause us to have cavities. Do any of you know what a cavity is?"

Allow the children time to answer or guess. "A cavity is a small hole in a tooth. It doesn't go all the way through but is kind of like a tiny cave."

Flip the *Unhealthy Foods* handout over to show the *Sad Tooth* side and say, "When we eat these unhealthy foods we make our teeth sad. We want happy healthy teeth!"

While saying this, show the children the *Happy Tooth*.

### 3 Ask, "Do you think we need teeth to talk?"

Wait to see if the children understand or respond to why teeth are needed for talking. You can ask the children, "Can you say 33 thumbs?"

Wait until all of the children have had an opportunity to say 33 thumbs. Then ask, "Did you feel how your tongue pressed on the back of your teeth? How many of you used your tongue to make the 'th' sound? Teeth help us say certain words better. Try saying it again and feel how your teeth help your tongue say 33 thumbs! Our teeth are important because they help us talk properly, chew our food, and give us beautiful smiles! Let's see all of your beautiful smiles!"

Wait for the children to smile and then continue by saying, "Great job! I love seeing you smile!"

**4** Read the book *Does a Lion Brush?* with great animation! Encourage the children to follow along by demonstrating what the characters of the book are doing. Ask the children what kinds of animals have teeth and what kinds don't.

**5** After reading, ask the children, "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?"

You can pause for the children to answer the questions and then discuss the answers before moving on to the next question. Continue by saying, "Good job! So, our teeth are hard, have some sharp or cutting edges, and are strong. What would happen if our teeth were soft and weak?"

Allow time for the children to answer. Then continue by saying, "That's right, you wouldn't be able to chew, they might break, and it would be hard to talk. Those are all great answers!"

### 6 Now ask, "How old were you when you got your teeth?"

The children should answer something along the lines of when they were a baby. Encourage their answers by saying, "Great job!"

Then ask, "When you were a baby, before you had teeth, what are some things that you couldn't do?"

Some of the answers may include talking and eating solid foods. Have the children look at the picture of the mother and baby on the *Healthy Smiles* handout (included). Ask, "Can you imagine if all of the mommy's big teeth were in the baby's little mouth? That would be pretty funny looking!"

**7** Then ask, "Now I have a really hard question. Can you guess how many teeth children have?"

After the children have answered with various guesses have them look at the *Primary Tooth Development* diagram (included). You can say, "Here is a picture that shows all the teeth in the top and bottom of your mouth. Let's count them together out loud. Wow! Twenty teeth! That's a lot."

You can continue by asking, "Do you think you will have these 20 teeth your whole life?"

When the children answer, ask them why they think that. Then say, "Those are all great reasons, but actually around the time you are 5, 6, or 7 years old, the teeth you have now, called baby teeth, will start to come out to make room for bigger teeth. As children get bigger they need bigger, stronger teeth."

Hold up the *Healthy Smiles* handout that you used earlier and point to the girls. Continue by saying, "Look at this little girl. She has lost a tooth already! That's OK because a bigger, stronger tooth will grow in its place. Look at the picture of the boy at the bottom of the handout. All of his big teeth have grown in. These teeth are his forever teeth. As you get older your 20 baby teeth will be replaced by 32 forever teeth. So we will want to help keep our teeth healthy now and always!"

Make sure the children understand that, not only do they need to keep forever (permanent) teeth healthy, but they also need to keep their baby teeth healthy too. Keeping baby teeth healthy helps with speech and helps permanent teeth grow in correctly.

**8** Ask the children, "What are some of the ways you can keep your teeth healthy?"

After the children have answered, say, "That's right! Brushing and flossing are great ways to help your teeth!"

Ask the children, "How many of you brush your teeth?"

Encourage their responses by saying "good job" and "that's great." Continue by asking, "How often should you brush your teeth?" The correct response is at least twice a day. You should also ask, "Do any of you floss your teeth?"

Wait for them to answer and then say, "That's great! We should try to floss our teeth every day."

**9** Ask, "What do you put on your toothbrush?"

When the children respond with toothpaste ask them why we use toothpaste to brush our teeth. Some of the responses may include that it cleans better than water, gets the food off your teeth, makes your teeth stronger, and makes your mouth feel clean. Respond with, "Those are all good answers. Does anyone know how much toothpaste you should put on your toothbrush?"

Listen to some of the answers and respond with, "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."

**10** Provide each child with a child-sized soft bristle toothbrush to go over the correct way to brush their teeth.

Have the children watch you as you demonstrate how to brush. Show them how to brush their top teeth downwards and bottom teeth upwards. Remind them to brush the front, back, inside, and outside of their teeth. Encourage the children to brush gently so they don't hurt their gums (explain where their gums are if they don't know). Say, "Be sure to brush every tooth!"

After going over how to correctly brush you can hand out plastic sandwich bags for each child to store their toothbrush (use a permanent marker to write the children's names on their bags).

**11** Prior to the flossing activity, cut out the teeth from the *Teeth* template provided and glue or tape the teeth onto pieces of cardboard. If cardboard is unavailable, then a heavy-stock paper can be used. Pair the children up so that everyone has a partner.

Create enough teeth so that each pair of children can have one set. Then provide each pair of children with a 6–8 inch piece of yarn. Ask for a volunteer from the class to help you clean your set of teeth. The volunteer will hold up the teeth while you demonstrate cleaning to the rest of the children. While “flossing” with the yarn, say, “Gently floss in between each tooth.”

Ask each child to practice flossing on the teeth held by their partner. After the first half of the children have practiced flossing, have them switch with their partner so that the other children can practice as well. Then explain, “The toothbrush doesn’t always get all the food and germs from in between our teeth. Flossing helps us clean food and germs from in between our teeth.”

**12** After the flossing activity, ask the children to stand up. Say, “Let’s pretend we are the bristles on top of a toothbrush. Let’s brush the top of our teeth by moving forward.”

Take a step forward and instruct the children to follow. Then say, “Now let’s brush the bottom of our teeth by moving backwards. Now let’s all move front and back. Can everyone sway their arms above their heads? Let’s sway our arms back and forth! This is how our toothbrush moves in our mouths when we brush our teeth.”

Instruct the children to continue moving while singing “Brush Your Teeth” to the tune of “Jingle Bells.”

“Brush your teeth,  
Brush your teeth,  
Give your teeth a treat.  
Brush up and down and all around,  
To keep them clean and neat!  
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Brush three times a day.  
Brush up and down and all around,  
Keep cavities away!”

Say, “I think you all have beautiful and healthy smiles! We all know how important it is to eat healthy foods, brush, and floss our teeth every day!”

Remember to make copies of the parent letter with the take-home activity sheet printed on the reverse side to send home with each child. The community fact sheet is also included for you to copy and display at your center or distribute as appropriate.

## additional activities for either age group

### Tooth Cleaning Art Activity

#### MATERIALS NEEDED

- White paint (non-toxic and washable)
- 4-ounce paper cups to hold the white paint (1 for each pair of children)
- *Tooth* template (included)
- Yellow paper teeth (1 for each child)
- Child-sized art paintbrushes (1 for each child)

Prior to starting this art activity, make copies of the *Tooth* template (included) on yellow paper.

The children will use a paint brush to “clean” (paint) the yellow paper tooth to a white tooth for a healthy smile. Announce to the children, “Let’s show everyone how well we can clean our teeth!”

Distribute the paint brushes, the picture of the yellow paper tooth and white paint.

- Have each child sit down with one of the yellow teeth and a brush. Explain that by using the paint brushes they can make the teeth clean and white.
- Hold up the yellow tooth and say, “If we don’t brush our teeth they will turn yellow!” You can use facial features to show that this is not what the children want.
- Show the children the correct way to brush the paper teeth with the white paint. Encourage the children to use the brush softly on the paper teeth and to brush up and down.

### Toothpaste Activity

#### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Baking soda
- Salt
- Flavored extract (vanilla, mint, etc.)
- Water
- 4-ounce paper cups

Start out the activity by saying, “I have a very important question for you. After you finish brushing your teeth, what do you do with the toothpaste in your mouth?” Allow the children to answer and then respond with “Yes. Spit out all of the toothpaste! Don’t swallow it. Toothpaste is for cleaning your teeth, not your stomach!”

Prior to this activity, collect the items needed for each child. Say, “Today we are going to make our very own toothpaste and use it to brush our teeth!”

- Provide each child with a mixture of 4 teaspoons of baking soda and one teaspoon of salt in a paper cup. Ask the children which flavor they would like their toothpaste to be. Have a few different extracts available for the children to choose from (ex: vanilla or peppermint). Pour 1 teaspoon of water and a drop of the extract into each cup.
- Tell the children to mix and stir the ingredients in their cup with their toothbrush (from the brushing activity earlier).
- Inform the children that they just made their own toothpaste!
- Allow the children to take turns brushing their teeth at an appropriate sink.

## Healthy Teeth Veggie Snack

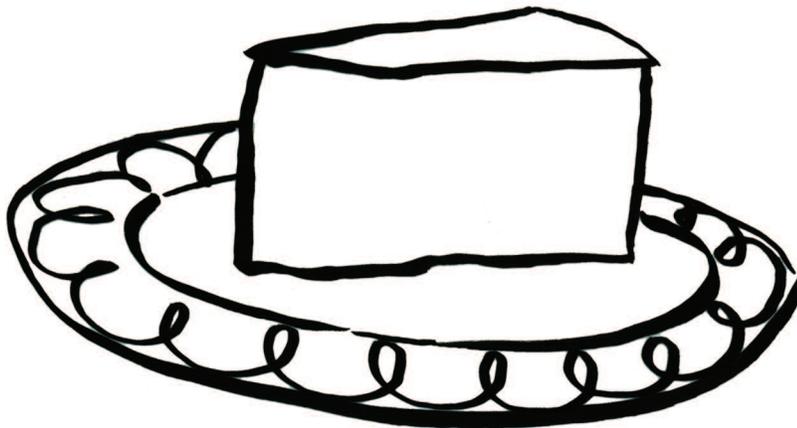
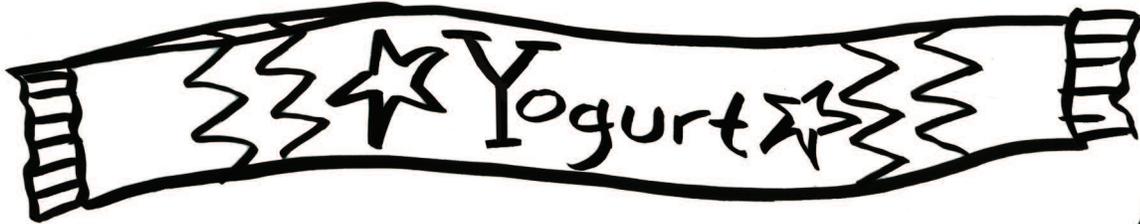
### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Assorted crunchy vegetables (carrots, celery, cucumbers, bell peppers, zucchini, etc.) washed and sliced
- Plain yogurt
- Dry packet of ranch dressing or vegetable soup mix such as Knorr®
- Plastic spoons (1 for each child)
- 4-ounce plastic cups (1 for each child)
- Paper plates (1 for each child)

Involve the children in making a snack that promotes good oral health by using food items such as washed, sliced crunchy vegetables (carrots, celery, cucumbers, bell peppers, zucchini, etc.) and yogurt dip.

- Prepare dip according to package directions using yogurt and dry dressing, or soup mix. Prepare enough to allow 2 ounces for each child.
- Instruct the children to wash their hands before enjoying this snack activity.
- Have the children sit in groups at various tables.
- Provide each child with a paper plate, a 4-ounce plastic cup, and a plastic spoon.
- In each child's cup, place 2 ounces of prepared dip. Instruct the children to stir the content of their cups with their spoon, to create a yummy dip for their veggies.
- On each table, place a small bowl containing an assortment of washed, sliced crunchy veggies such as carrots, celery, cucumbers, bell peppers, zucchini, etc. (you can choose which crunchy veggies to include). Be sure to provide serving utensils with the veggies.
- Assist children in serving themselves various veggies to enjoy with their dip and be sure to point out that this is a yummy snack that will help maintain healthy, happy teeth.

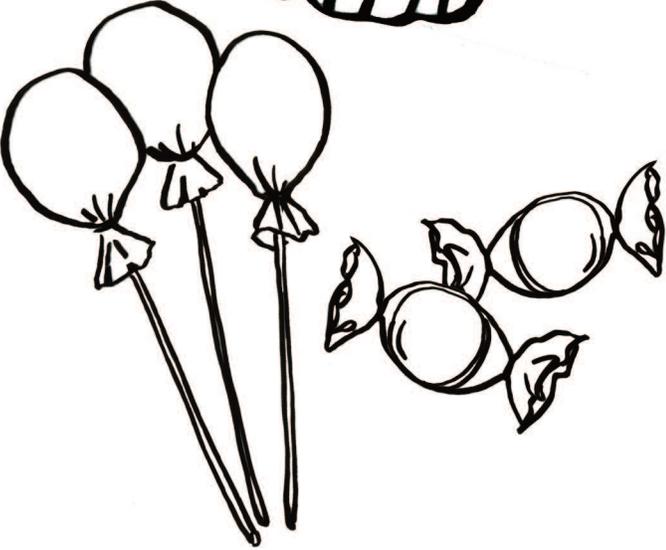
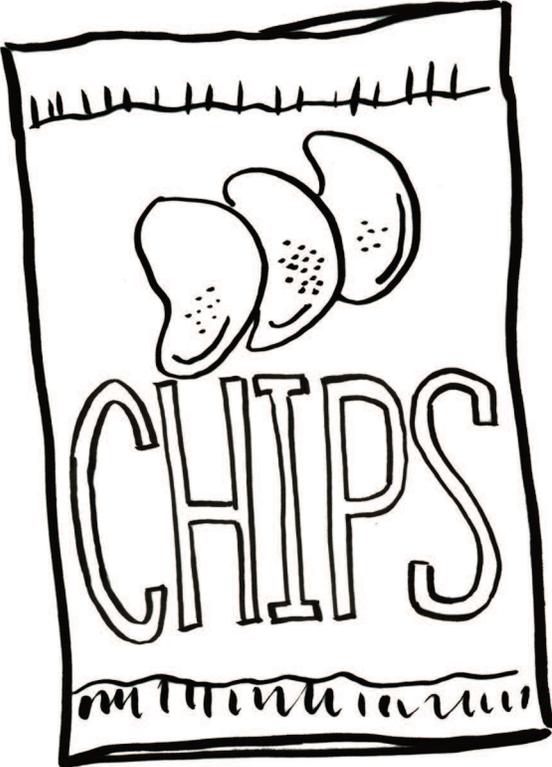
# Dairy Foods



# Healthy Foods



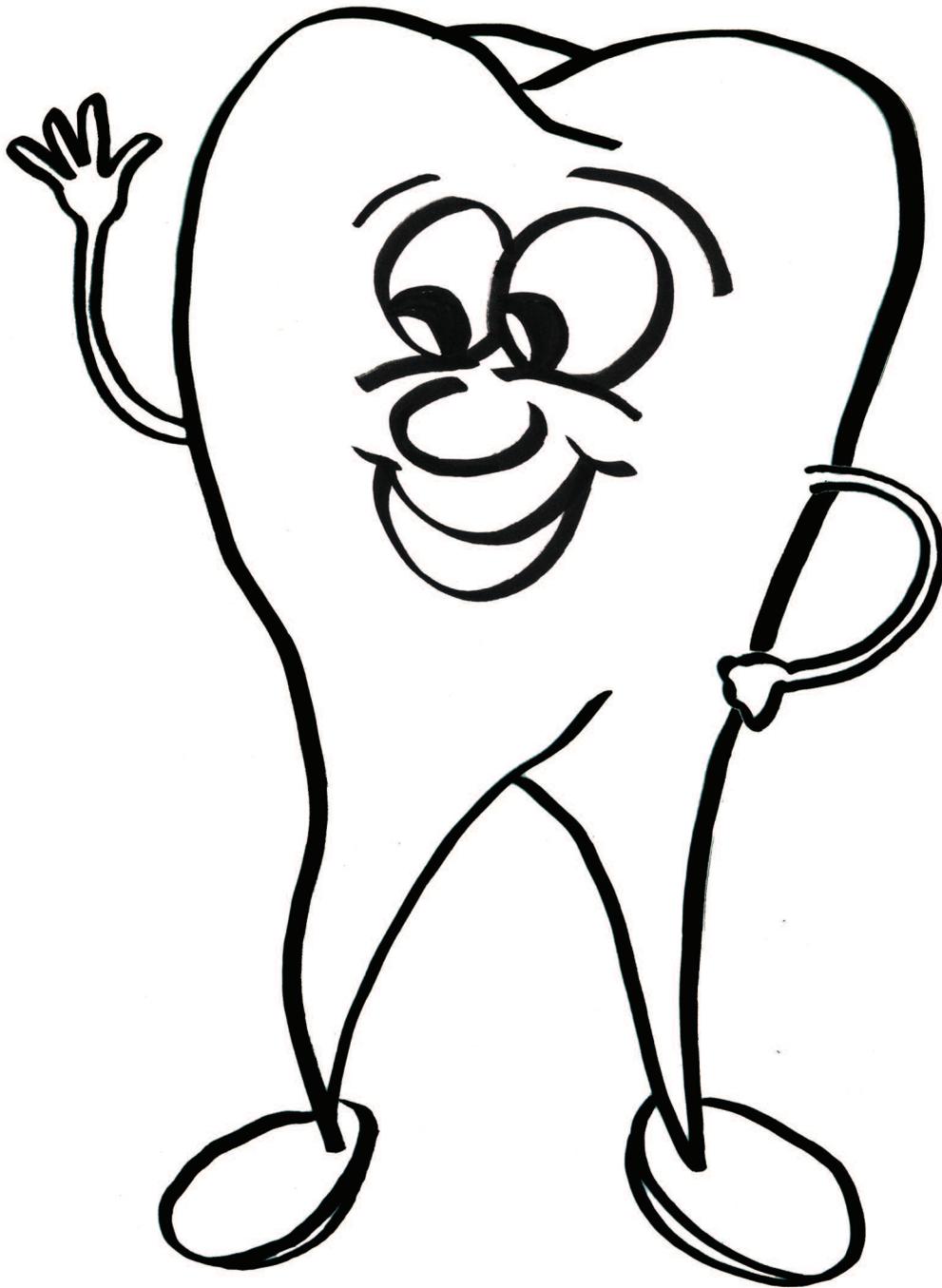
# Unhealthy Foods



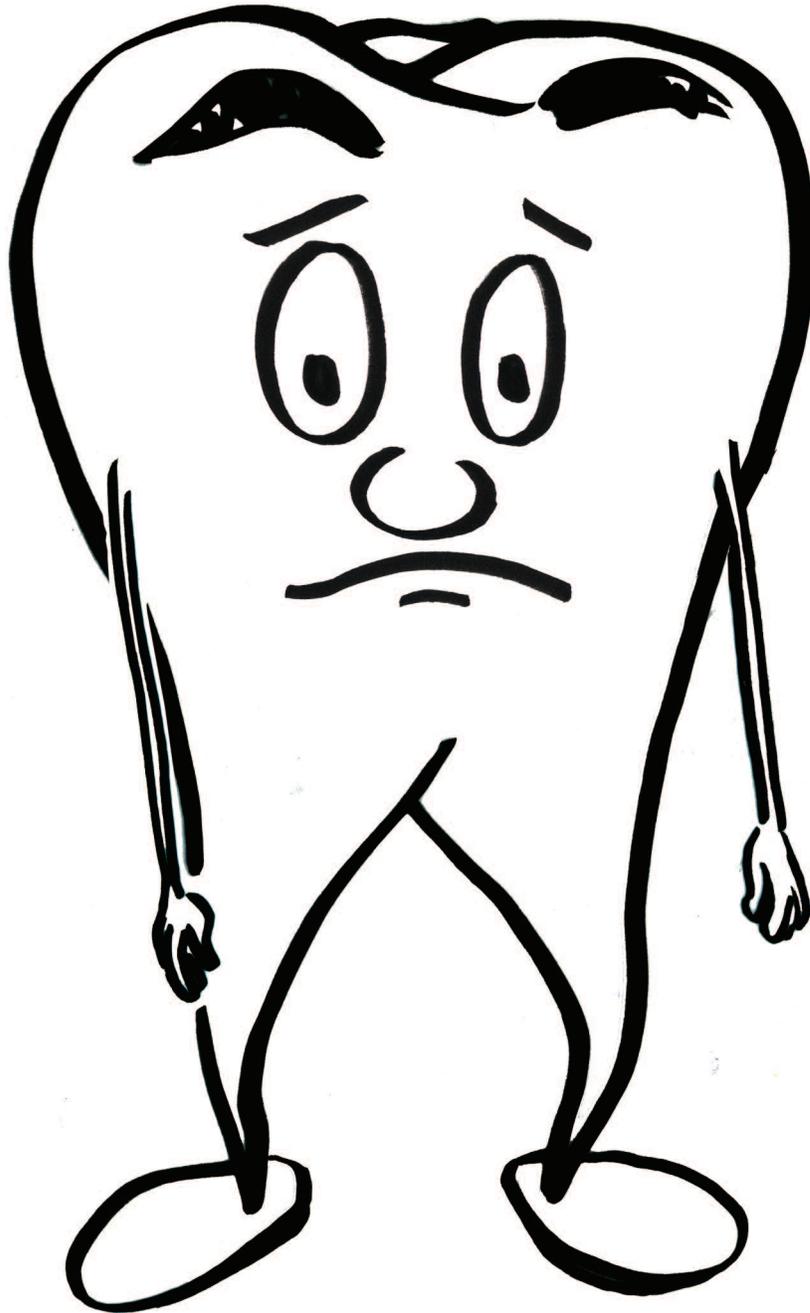
# Healthy Smiles



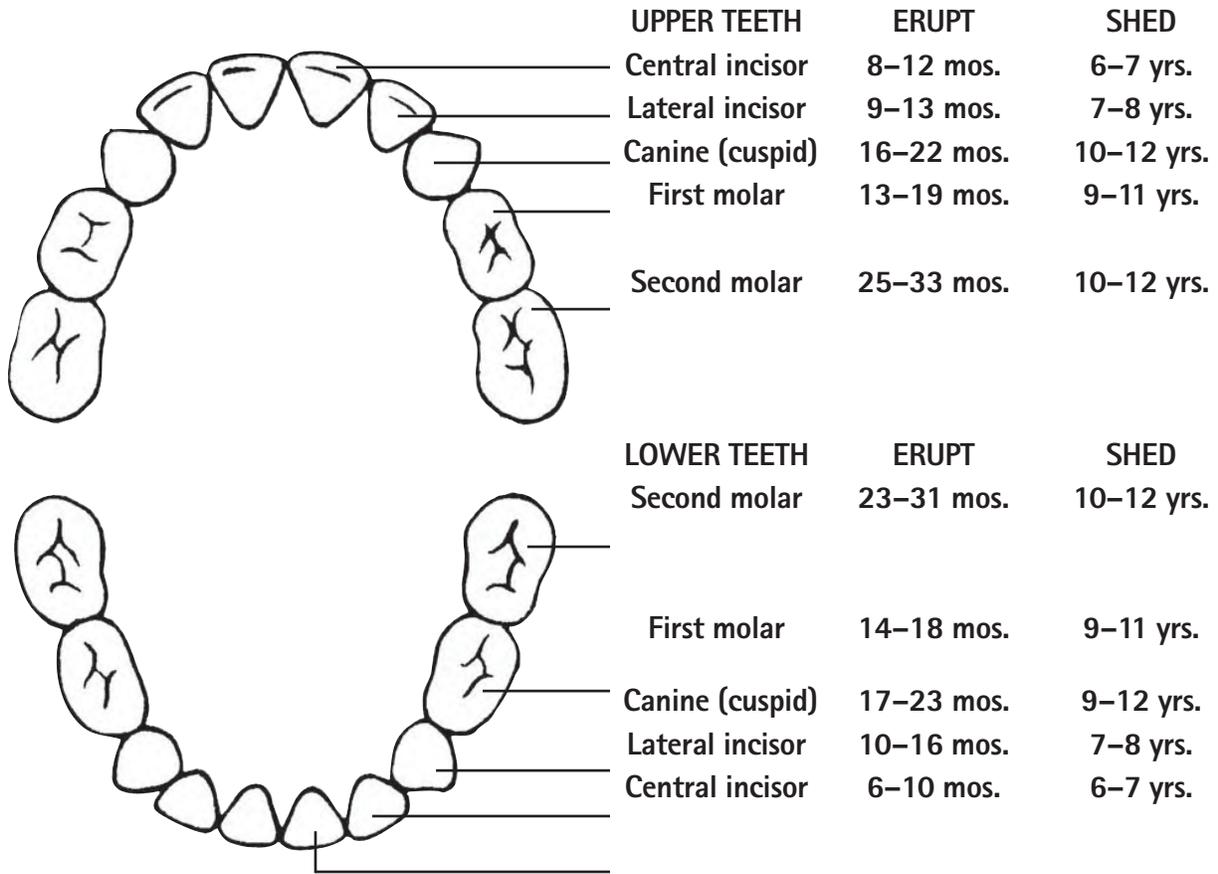
# Happy Tooth



# Sad Tooth



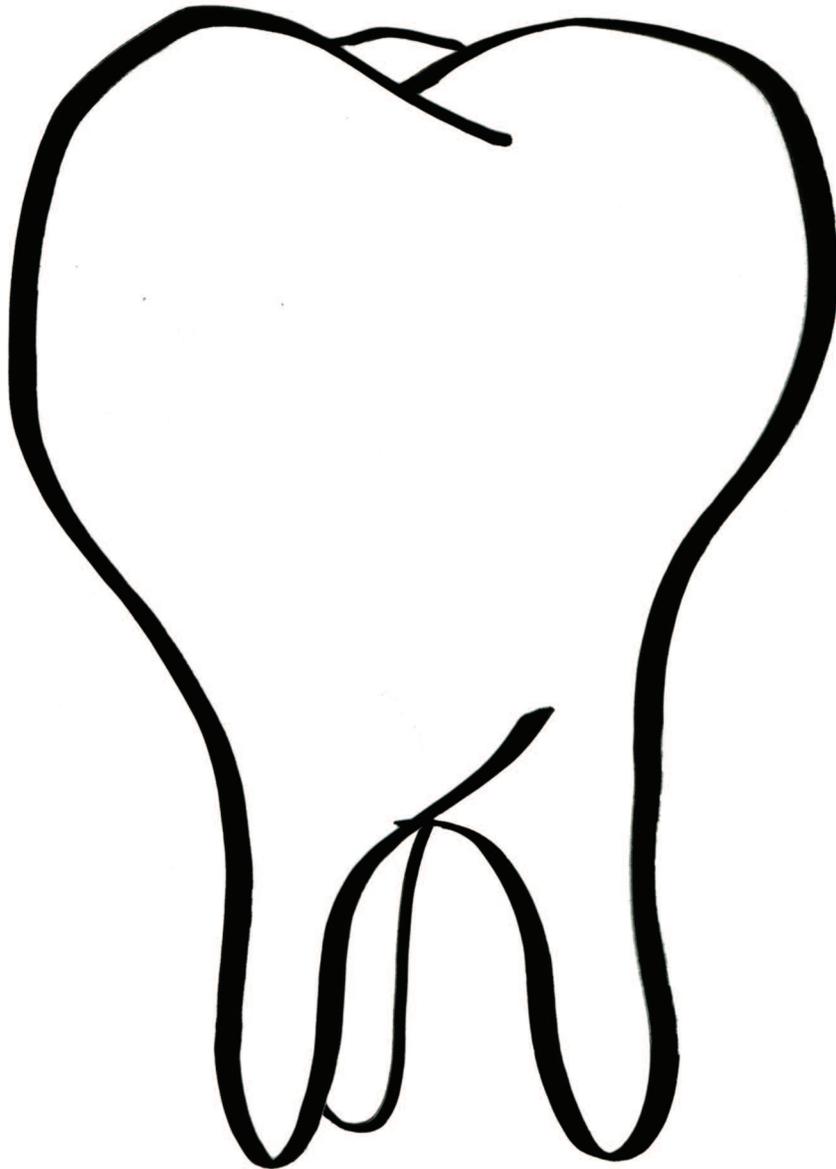
# Primary Tooth Development



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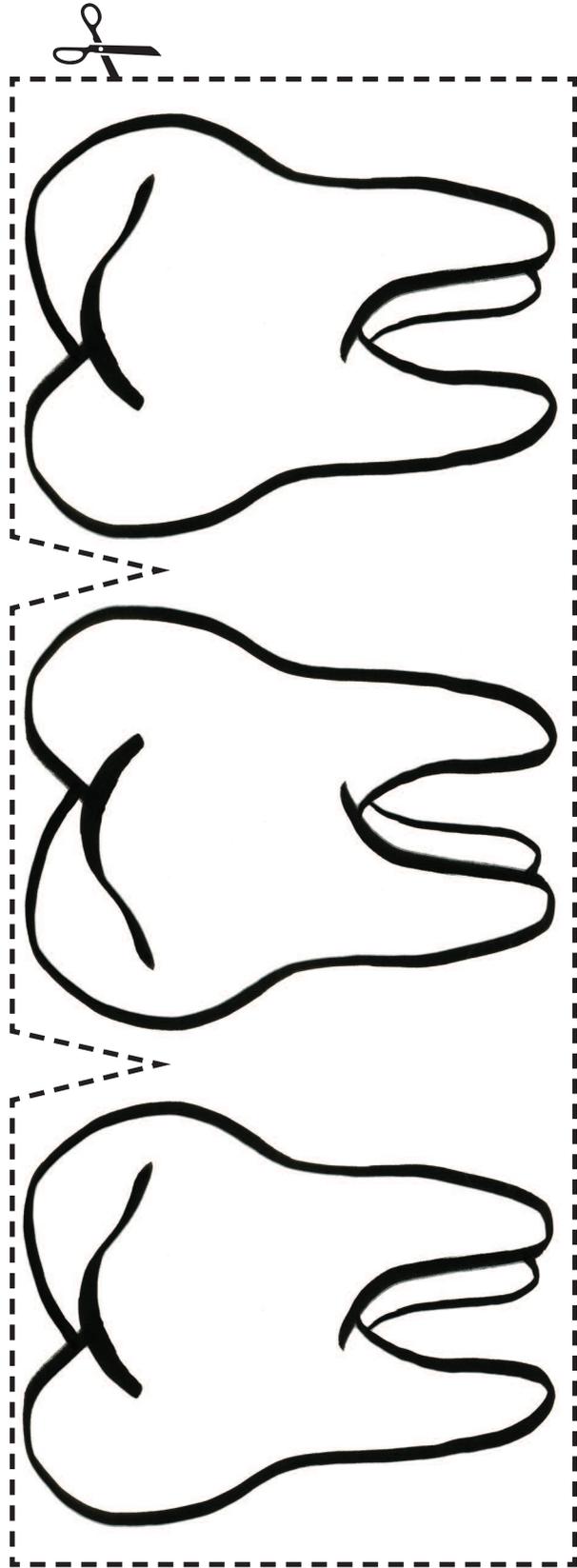
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Tooth



# Teeth Template

Cut along the dotted lines. Then glue or tape the cutout to a piece of cardboard so that the top of teeth line up with the top edge of the paper—you will see that the cardboard shows four small triangles in between each tooth. You will need to cut out the triangles on the piece of cardboard so cardboard isn't showing between the teeth.



## Dear Parent:

Your child has been learning about how nutrition relates to oral health in our lesson, *Healthy Smiles*. We have been discussing how crunchy healthy foods like carrots and apples can help keep teeth clean and healthy. In addition, we've learned how certain foods can cause cavities. Want your kids to reach for a healthy snack? Make sure fruits and veggies are within reach.

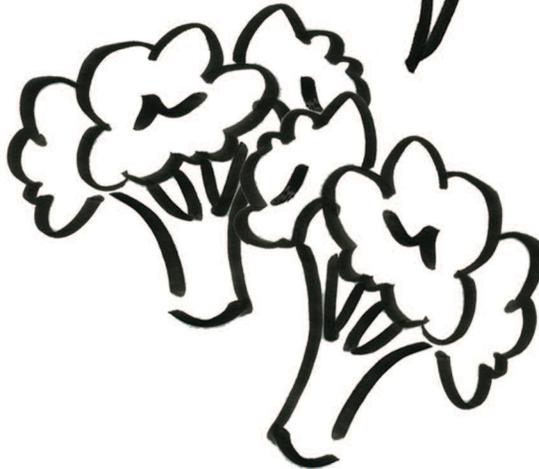
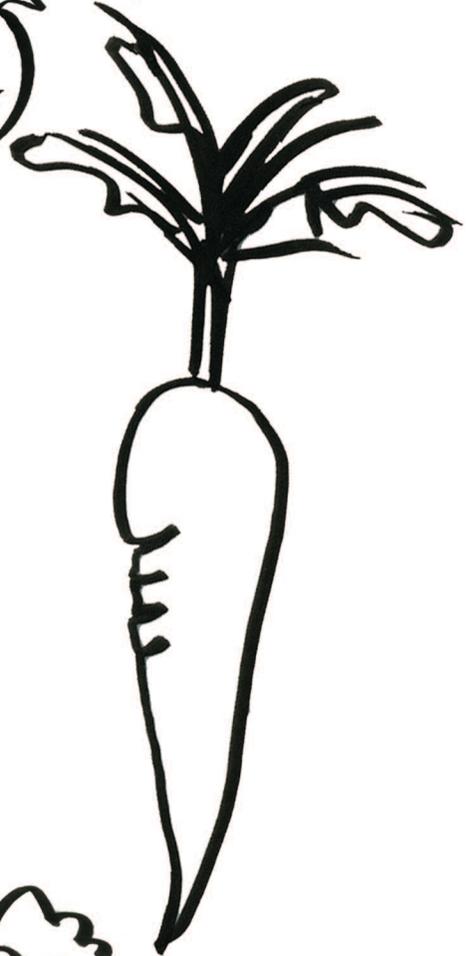
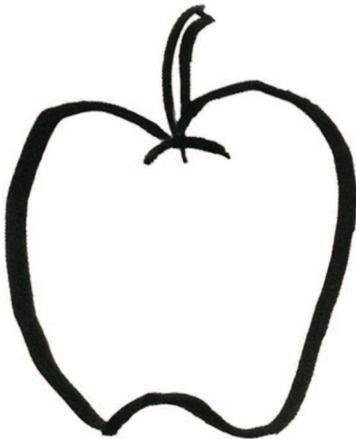
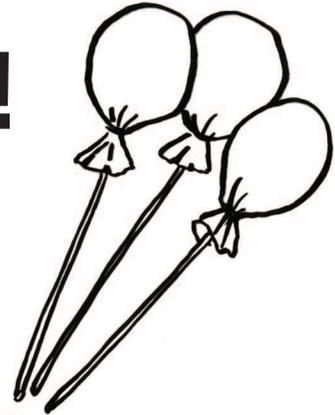
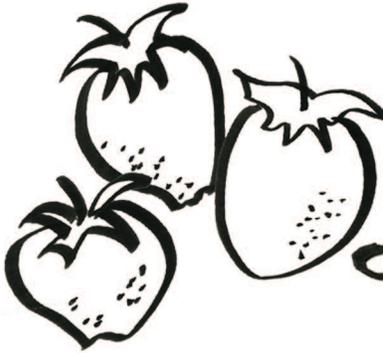
Your child knows the correct way to brush and why it is important to brush at least twice a day and floss every day. Parents can be role models and help their children develop good oral health habits. Supervise your child while they brush their teeth and praise them when they do it correctly. You have a huge impact on the habits that your child forms.

Help your child remember how important it is to have healthy teeth—turn this page over and do the *Happy Teeth* activity with them.

Sincerely,



Circle the foods that make your **teeth happy!**



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# Help your child develop a Healthy smile



- **Start cleaning teeth when that first tooth appears**

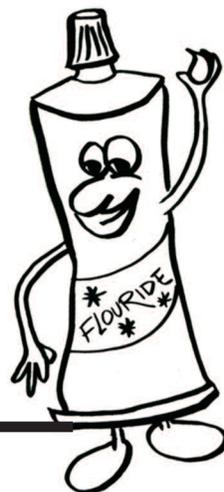
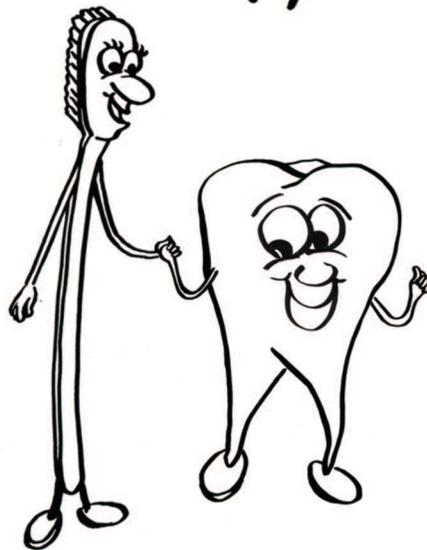
- Clean your baby's teeth with a clean, damp cloth every day. When more teeth come in, switch to a small, soft toothbrush, and brush your child's teeth at least twice a day.

- **Supervise brushing**

- Brush your child's teeth until your child has the skill to handle the toothbrush alone. Teach your child to spit out the toothpaste and rinse well after brushing.

- **Toothpaste and fluoride**

- As soon as teeth erupt, begin brushing their teeth with a pea-size amount of toothpaste with fluoride—fluoride is important for fighting cavities. Know your water source and how much, if any, fluoride is in it, and talk to your doctor or dentist about your child's specific fluoride needs. Do NOT allow a child under 6 to use a fluoride mouth rinse unless the child's doctor recommends it. Remember, if too much fluoride toothpaste is swallowed by your child, their permanent teeth may have white spots.



# Healthy Smiles

## references and resources

1. Ehrlich, Fred. *Does a Lion Brush?* New Jersey: Blue Apple Books, 2002.
2. McGuire, Leslie. *Brush Your Teeth Please: A Pop-up Book*. New York: Reader's Digest Children's Books, 2013.
3. Clifton, DC, "Making Toothpaste: A Fun Activity for Kids," November 2006. Website: [www.articlecity.com/articles/kids\\_and\\_teens/article\\_374.shtml](http://www.articlecity.com/articles/kids_and_teens/article_374.shtml)
4. American Dental Association. Website: [www.ada.org/](http://www.ada.org/)
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Website: [www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/](http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/)
6. Preschool Education Music & Songs. Website: [www.preschooleducation.com/sdental.shtml](http://www.preschooleducation.com/sdental.shtml)
7. Toothbrushes: Check with your local county health department or a local dentist for free resources.  
**SPECIAL NOTE:** Depending on the size of your class, you may be able to take a field trip to the dentist, or ask one to come in and speak to your class.