

Dental Health!

February is Dental Health Month! Use this opportunity to instruct and encourage your students on the importance of taking care of their teeth.

In some cases, you may wish to set up a schedule for your students to brush their teeth at school. A local dentist may donate toothbrushes and toothpaste for the students' use. Provide each student with a daily brushing log for them to record those times they brush their teeth.

Here are a few suggested dental health activities to promote and inspire youngsters to brush regularly.

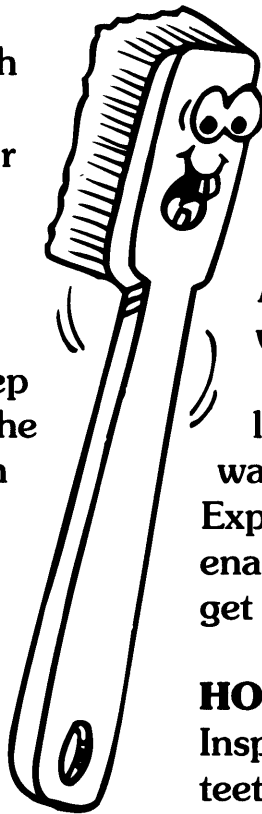
TEETH, TEETH, TEETH

As a home assignment, ask each student to stand in front of the bathroom mirror and count their exact number of teeth. Have them write the number on a slip of paper. During class the next day, tally the number of teeth in the whole class and keep secret the number of teeth for the class members. The person with the closest guess could win a new toothbrush!

THE TOOTH FAIRY

Encourage students to write imaginative stories using the tooth fairy as the main character. Students might like to speculate on what she does with all the teeth she finds, or where she lives.

Children may also like to write letters to the tooth fairy. Collect all the letters and then distribute them to older students who will write back creative responses.



TOOTH SCIENCE

Demonstrate to your students how acids eat away the enamel on our teeth with this simple experiment. Place a raw egg in a clear glass of vinegar overnight. Ask students to speculate on what will happen. In the morning, you will see that the vinegar has slowly softened the shell in the same way acid softens tooth enamel. Explain to the children that when the enamel on our teeth is weakened, we get a toothache and a cavity.

HOMEMADE TOOTHPASTE

Inspire your students to brush their teeth by making your own toothpaste. It's easy to make!

For every child in class, mix 1 tablespoon baking soda and a drop of peppermint flavoring. Add more drops if the mixture fails to make a paste. Spoon the paste onto each student's tooth brush. Hold a discussion as to which tastes better, homemade or store-bought toothpaste.

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TYPES OF TEETH

There are four different types of teeth that help perform different jobs. They are:

INCISORS - Located in the front of the mouth, these eight teeth have sharp, chisel-shaped crowns that cut food.

CUSPIDS - There is one cuspid next to each lateral incisor. Cuspids are pointed to help tear food.

BICUSPIDS - There are four pairs of bicuspids located next to the cuspids. They tear and crush our food.

MOLARS - There are four sets of three molars located at the back of our mouths. They help us by grinding our food.

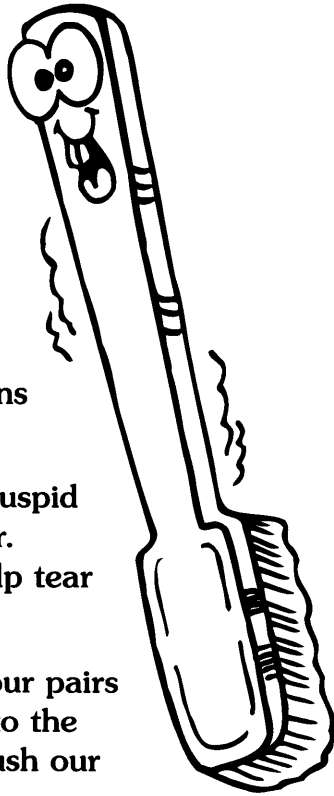
Ask the students to try to locate the various teeth in their own mouths. By age 13 or so, children should have a full set of permanent teeth.

TEETH IMPRINTS

Children will love this activity that allows them to thoroughly inspect their own teeth alignments.

Give each student a slice of American Cheese. Ask them to place the slice between their teeth and bite down gently. (Make sure you instruct them not to bite through the cheese.) Now, have them inspect their bite.

Do all of their teeth seem straight? Do the upper teeth fit inside the lower teeth? Does the imprint show any missing teeth? Ask them to measure the width of the arch.



PARTS OF THE TEETH

Teeth provide three basic functions for the human body; Chewing provides the starting point of digestion, They help us speak properly and, finally, teeth add to our personal appearance.

It is also important that students know the different parts of their teeth. Ask your students to review the following:

CROWN - The part of teeth that we see.

ENAMEL - The hard, white outer covering of each tooth.

ROOT - The part of the tooth that is anchored in the gum.

DENTIN - A bone-like tissue inside the tooth.

PULP - The soft center of each tooth that houses the nerves and blood vessels.

LOST TEETH

Display a large paper tooth on the class board. As children lose their teeth, write their names on the tooth. Keep a supply of small plastic bags for children to carry home the teeth they lose at school.

TOOTH POEMS

Have children write short poems about brushing their teeth. Ask them to copy their poems onto a paper tooth. The poems can then be taken home and mounted on the bathroom mirror as a reminder to brush first thing in the morning and last thing at night.

