

Basics of Oral Health 1

Baby Teeth Are Important

Instructions: Ask for three volunteers from the audience to line up next to each other. They will be the primary (baby) teeth. Each person will begin by holding a “tooth,” white side of paper toward the audience. The presenter is the permanent tooth.

These three volunteers are baby teeth that start out clean and healthy (*hold white side out toward audience*). But they go to bed with a bottle of juice or eat crackers all day long. The germs get fed and the food is not cleaned off—soon they begin to develop decay that looks like brown spots. (*turn papers over to colored side toward audience*)

One tooth has a really bad cavity and is ready to fall out or maybe it was taken out early because it was so decayed. (*center “tooth” moves away*)

What happens to the baby teeth that are left? (*ask for ideas from audience*) They shift in to fill the space. (*volunteers bend toward each other*) They might become crooked. They are hard to keep clean.

Pretty soon, children grow up and begin to lose their baby teeth. It is time for a permanent adult tooth to come in. The first two adult front teeth come in at about age 6. (*presenter becomes the Permanent Tooth and tries dramatically to squeeze in between the two baby teeth while holding white side of paper toward audience*)

What happens to that perfect new tooth? (*ask for ideas*) Yes, there is hardly room, it may come in crooked, hard to clean, etc. and it is coming into a mouth full of tooth decay! It hardly has a chance because there is so much decay in the mouth. Soon it will decay, too. (*flip to colored side of paper, so now the colored sides of all the teeth are facing the audience*)

Let’s remember baby teeth ARE important! Even though children’s baby teeth are only in their mouths for 6-12 years, they have really big jobs that will help protect and shape our permanent (adult) teeth. We need a healthy mouth!

Supplies

- Four sheets each of white and brown paper to make four paper “teeth”—front side is white; the back side is brown.
- “Baby Teeth Are Important” handout.

Discussion and Parent Practice Handout

- What is something you learned about baby teeth tonight?
- Do you have any questions about baby teeth?
- What are some ways you could use this story with your children?
- Here is a handout for you to take home. This handout has some important reminders of the things you can do to keep baby teeth healthy!

Baby Teeth Are Important

Did You Know?

Never think they are just baby teeth! They have important jobs to do—they help children eat foods, form words, and hold a healthy space for adult teeth.

Take the Healthy Mouth Challenge!

I will:

- Ask family, friends, or my home visitor for the name of a dentist who works with young children.
- Schedule my baby's first dental visit by his/her first birthday.
- Hang the "My Baby's Teeth Are Important" sign in the bathroom to help us remember to wipe baby's gums or brush every morning and night (as soon as he/she gets teeth!)



My baby's teeth are important and I will help keep them clean!

Sing "If You're Happy and You Know It" with the following verses while wiping baby's gums or brushing his teeth:

If you're healthy and you know it brush your teeth! If you're healthy and you know it brush your teeth, if you're healthy and you know it and you really want to show it, if you're healthy and you know it brush your teeth!

If you're healthy and you know it shout, happy teeth! If you're healthy and you know it wipe baby's gums! If you're healthy and you know it smile big!

