

Dino's Big Tooth Adventure: Why Brushing Matters!

Oral Health Activity for Early Childhood Classroom

ITEMS NEEDED:

- Hand held puppet – preferably with teeth
- Toothbrush
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** long sleeve disposable or reusable gowns or lab coats, mask, eye protection.

OUTLINE & NARRATIVE:

1. **Introduce yourself and your puppet.** “Hello, my name is _____ and I’ve brought my friend _____ to help me talk about why our teeth are important and how to take care of them.” (Eating/chewing, self-esteem and speaking)
2. **Eating/Chewing**
 - “Our teeth are very important for lots of reasons. Can anyone raise their hand and tell me, what is something we use our teeth for? What do our teeth help us do?” (You are looking for a chewing/eating response; if they need help, you can act out eating something.)
 - “That’s right! Our teeth help us to chew our food. It would be really hard to eat if we didn’t have teeth, right? What would we be able to eat? Mashed potatoes? Oatmeal? That would get old. We want to be able to bite into a crunchy apple or eat a piece of steak if we want; we need our teeth to be healthy to do that.”
3. **Self-esteem**
 - “What about how our teeth makes us feel? What do we do when someone wants to take our picture?” (point to your smile)
 - “That’s right! We smile. Let me see everyone’s smiles.” (Dino and I look around at all of their adorable smiles.) Me to Dino: “They have great smiles, don’t they Dino?” (I look at him and he nods)
 - “When we someone smiling do they look happy and confident? (Dino nods again)
 - “Do you think we would want to smile very often if all of our teeth were rotten?” (Dino shakes his head no)
 - “Yeah. Probably not, so we want to feel good about ourselves and want to smile, so we need our teeth for this.”
4. **Speaking**
 - “Did you know that our teeth also help us to pronounce our words?”
 - “When we say the V sound, vuh-vuh-vuh-vuh.. we put our top teeth on our lower lip to make that sound.” “Let me have everyone say the word LOVE” (kids say the word)

- **“When we say the L sound luh-luh-luh-luh-luh.. we put our tongue to the back of our top front teeth. So, we need our teeth to be able to pronounce our words. It would be hard to understand us if we didn’t have teeth, right Dino?”** (Dino nods)
- **“So, we need our teeth to chew our food, smile and feel good about ourselves, pronounce our words and help keep us healthy. Can everyone agree that our teeth are important and we should take good care of them?”** (Dino nods)

DISCUSS WAYS WE CAN TAKE CARE OF OUR TEETH. (Brush 2 min 2 x day, visit the dentist, eat healthy foods and drinks) – (Demo proper brushing at end of presentation)

5. Brushing:

- **“Who can raise their hand and tell me, what is one way we can take care of our teeth?”** (pretend to brush)
- **“That’s right! Brushing our teeth! Who brushed their teeth this morning?”** (kids raise hands)
- **“Great. Ok, now who brushed their teeth last night before they went to bed?”** (fewer kids raise hands)
- **“We need to brush our teeth every morning and every night. It should be part of our routine, just like getting dressed in the morning and putting on pajamas at night. Would you come to school without getting dressed?”** (Dino shakes his head no)
- **“That sounds crazy, right? But, it sounds just as crazy to me to leave the house or start your day without brushing your teeth. We want brushing your teeth to be just as much a part of your daily routine as getting dressed every morning. These are things that we do that no one has to remind us to do; we just know that we do them every day.”**
- **“What happens if we don’t brush our teeth? That’s right, we can get cavities. Does anyone know what a cavity is? That’s right, it’s when our teeth get rotten and we get holes in our teeth. Dino, do we want holes in our teeth?”** (Dino shakes no)
- **“No. We don’t. That’s why it’s important to get into the habit of brushing every morning and night. You guys are going to start to lose your baby teeth soon and you will get your big, permanent, adult teeth. Does anyone know how long those teeth those have to last us? How many years to we need those teeth? (kids guess) FOREVER! Those teeth have to last us the rest of our lives, so we need to take care of them, right Dino?”** (Dino nods)

6. Eating Healthy Food/Beverages:

- **“Did you know that the foods we eat also affect our teeth? Who can raise their hands and give me an example of a healthy food?”** (go around and get to as many kids as possible)
- **“You guys know of so many delicious, healthy foods, right Dino?”** (Dino nods)
- **“We want to eat healthy foods most of the time like fruits, vegetables, cheese, yogurt, eggs, nuts, and meat.”**
- **“Now who can raise their hand and tell me something we eat that is probably not very healthy for our teeth?”**
- **“Right. Candy, cookies, donuts, all of the things that have a lot of sugar, but also junk food like chips, Takis, things like that. Now these things taste good, but they aren’t very healthy**

for our teeth or for our bodies, so we need to try to eat healthy foods most of the time. We can have them sometimes, but we should save it for special occasions.”

- Ask Dino, “do you think it’s ok to eat a cupcake for someone’s birthday? (Dino nods) Yeah. That’s probably ok. It’s a special occasion. But, Dino, do you think we should eat cupcakes for breakfast every morning? (Dino shakes his head no). Absolutely not! That is too much sugar, so we need to limit how much sugar we allow ourselves to have, right?” (Dino nods)
- “What do you guys drink when you’re thirsty?” (I’m looking for the answer “water”)
- “Good! Water is the best thing to drink, especially in between meals. If we drink something else, we should have it with our meals. Like plain milk.”
- “Juice does have some vitamins, but it also has a lot of sugar, so we don’t need juice. If we do have it, we should try to add water to it so it’s not so sweet. What is something people drink sometimes that is not good at all for our teeth?” (I’m looking for the response of soda, but I often get “BEER!” Lol)
- “That’s right! Soda. I hope that none of you drinks soda because there is nothing good about soda. It has everything bad for us; lots of sugar, sodium, caffeine, acid... and nothing good for us; no vitamins. So, we should try not to drink sodas.” (Kids will often tell on their parents or someone for drinking sodas often. I tell them that we can be a good example to others around us, but we are responsible for ourselves and we have to live with the consequences of how we treat our teeth and our bodies)

7. Visit the Dentist

- “Now there is one more thing we can do to take good care of our teeth and that is going to the dentist! Who has been to the dentist before? Good. The dentist is a fun place, as long as we take good care of our teeth.”
- “So when we go to the dentist, they will tell us to open wide (Dino opens wide as I examine his teeth) and may count our teeth to make sure everything looks good.”
- “They might also polish them and make them feel smooth. Then, they may paint on a little bit of fluoride; it’s like vitamins for your teeth and helps to make them strong and healthy. Let’s see everyone open wide, AHHHH. Very good. I bet you guys are excellent patients.”

8. Demonstrate proper brushing that is age appropriate.

- “Great. So now I am going to show you on Dino how to brush. Do you think we have to wait for someone to remind us that we need to brush?” (Dino shakes no)
- “No. You guys are getting bigger and already know we have to brush every morning and every night. Parents have a lot to do and think about, so we can be helpful and remind them we need to brush. Do you think it’s alright to have our parents or someone else help us brush our teeth? (Dino nods) Yes! It’s ok for us to brush on our own, but we should have an adult go over them and make sure we have done a good job.”
- “Ok. Let’s start with putting a little bit of toothpaste on our brush (pretend). Do we need a lot of toothpaste? (Dino shakes no) No. We just need a tiny little bit, like one grain of rice. Ok, let’s start on the outside surface of our teeth. This is the part we see when we smile. Start on one side and make circles, circles everywhere (demonstrate). Be sure and feel the toothbrush bristles lightly scrubbing your gums to get those sugar bugs off.”

- **“Try to get all the way to the back because sugar bugs like to hide in the back so we need to be sure we get to all their hiding places. Once we think we’ve got the outsides clean, we need to open and clean the biting/chewing parts of our teeth (demonstrate on Dino). This is the part where all of the food gets stuck when we eat, so we need to make sure we get all the food and germs out of those biting surfaces. Be sure to get all of the bottom teeth and all of the top teeth.**
- **Once we’ve got those parts clean, then we need to brush the inside of our teeth by our tongues. (Demonstrate) Brush all of the bottom insides, behind the bottom front teeth, the top insides, behind the top front teeth.**
- **Then what do we brush last? (pretend to brush tongue) That’s right! Does everyone brush their tongues when they brush their teeth? It’s important to also brush our tongues because they can have germs on them as well and that’s where bad breath lives too, so be sure to brush your tongues.**
- **Then what do we do last? (pretend to spit in the sink). That’s’ right! We spit out all the extra toothpaste into the sink. Toothpaste tastes good, but it’s for our teeth; not our tummies. So try not to swallow too much toothpaste or you might get a tummy ache. (Dino pats his belly). Then we don’t even have to rinse with water, especially when we brush right before bed. Toothpaste can do its job better if we don’t rinse it away, so just spit out everything you can and try not to rinse after.”**

9. Wrap up and thank you’s.

“Thank you guys for being such good listeners! Don’t forget.. what are we going to do every morning and every night? (BRUSH OUR TEETH!!) Perfect!” (Dino waves goodbye and you escape as soon as possible before they all want to hug Dino)