

# Smile Big: A Fun Visit to the Dentist!

## Oral Health Activity for Early Childhood Classroom

### ITEMS NEEDED:

- Visiting the Dentist Worksheet - point out the pictures as you discuss – distribute one copy for each child to take home and discuss with family.
- Bag containing overgarment, gloves, mask, safety glasses, patient bib, bib clip, kids safety glasses, typodont, disposable mirror
- An exposed radiograph or book with a picture of radiograph
- Saliva ejector

### **Notes:**

Consider wearing scrubs to the school for the classroom visit. This was as much about desensitization for the kids as it was about "what are you going to see". You can sit in a chair with the kids around you and pass out the worksheet. Ask them to sit legs crossed and put the paper on the floor in front of them (then they aren't tempted to play with it). Also encourage hand raising as it helps to keep some control over the flow.

There were always a handful of "experienced" kids that have been to the dentist and know all the things. 😊

### OUTLINE:

#### **1. Introduce self - "Hi I am \_\_\_\_\_. I am a dental hygienist. Do you know what that is?"**

- Explain that the Dr checks their whole body, but the dentist/DH checks their teeth to make sure they stay healthy.
- Ask how many have been to the dentist and ask them to do something silly like tap their nose if they have. Then ask who has seen a doctor, if they have, ask them to pat the top of their head. This gets everyone involved.

#### **2. Show and tell what dental professionals wear in the office and why**

- Stand up and ask if they noticed that their clothes are different from yours (scrubs)? Explain that they are your "work" clothes.
- Pull out your lab coat or over garment and ask if they knew what this is for? Some may guess all kinds of things, but then ask if they wear anything when they paint to help keep their clothes clean? Some may respond they wear a smock when they paint. You can explain your white coat/over garment is to help keep your clothes clean because you work in people's mouths and don't want to get saliva all over yourself. They may chuckle at that.
- Then ask them to point to the gloves on their form. While they do that, put yours on and ask if they know why you wear them. Tell them that even though you wash your hands a lot during the day that no one wants your bare hands in their mouth, so the gloves help your hands stay clean.
- Then point to the mask on the paper and ask if they know what that is. Some say a helmet, but since COVID most know it is a mask. If you have samples of different levels, you can

show and explain the differences, but no matter the level and the way they look they help keep our germs to ourselves.

- Then pull out your safety glasses/loupes and put them on. Ask if they know why we wear them. Then say something like, these are all the things that we wear when you come to the dental office. Once you have all your PPE on, tell them they get to wear some neat things too and ask for a volunteer to play the patient.

### **3. Show and tell what dental professionals may do during their dental visit.**

- Once you get a volunteer up there beside you point to the bib on the form and ask if anyone knows what that is...if they have a younger sibling, they catch it really fast. Then pull out a bib and ask the child that volunteered if you can put it on them. Sometimes they say no, so you'll just need to get a new volunteer. You may want to leave the bib folded in half so that it is just their size but explain that for adults we need to make it big because they may drool a lot LOL. We explain that it is used to keep their shirt clean.
- Ask them if they know how dark it is in their mouth? They all shake their heads...then have them open big and look at their neighbor and comment about how dark it is in there. Tell them the light on the chair is bright like the sun, which helps you to see the teeth all the way in the back, but that sometimes that light may get in their eyes. Then whip out the kid's sunglasses and have them put them on. They are usually very happy to be the model. Everyone claps as you thank your volunteer model and they sit back down.
- Next, pull out your typodont and open it saying that sometimes it is still hard to see even with the light and then grab the mirror and show them how you see the teeth. Ask them to find the mirror on their form. Then point to the explorer and ask them if they know what this is...it always cracks me up with their answers. I tell them it is my tooth counter, and you can show them how we count teeth. Talk about them having 10 teeth on the top and 10 on the bottom and they can practice counting on their fingers. You can also talk about "Mr. Thirsty" (suction) and our squirt gun to wash the teeth off. Then talk about x-rays/films and show a sample tooth x-ray. End your presentation by telling them these are the things you will see when you go to the dental office.

### **4. Optional oral health screening**

- **Check to see if consent forms are required.** Ask them to all put their "Visiting the Dentist" papers in a pile in the middle of the circle, this allows the teachers to distribute them to folders for backpack mail. After they put their papers in a pile, ask them to line up so you can see what a great job they are doing brushing at home. This is when you can quickly screen with a flashlight and make notes. After they show you their teeth, you can put a mask on them and tell them they will be a dentist for the day. It is a great way to get everyone to participate and then they can take their mask home. It makes a good conversation starter with their family. They also got a goody bag with toothbrush, toothpaste and your contact information should there be questions.