

Oral Health Activities for the Early Childhood Classroom

Oral Hygiene Activities

- **Brushing Practice with Dry Erase Fun:** Print pictures of a mouth showing teeth and put them in clear protective sleeves. Use a dry erase marker to draw “germs, food, and plaque” on the teeth. Let children “brush the teeth” with a toothbrush to wipe away the marker—kids love this hands-on cleaning activity!
- **Storytime and Puppet Play:** Read a story about toothbrushing, then use a puppet with teeth to demonstrate proper brushing technique. Encourage kids to take turns practicing on the puppet.
- **Glitter Germs Handwashing:** Use glitter on children's hands to represent “germs” and have them wash thoroughly. Discuss how brushing teeth is similar to washing off germs, emphasizing the importance of thorough cleaning.
- **Giant Toothbrushing Practice:** Use a large model of teeth with a giant toothbrush for group demonstrations or allow children to practice brushing on dolls with real toothbrushes.

Visiting the Dentist Activities

- **Puppet as Patient Role-Play:** Use a puppet or stuffed animal as the “patient.” Put on a bib, sunglasses, and talk about opening wide for the dentist. Switch roles—let the stuffed animal be the dentist while you dress it in PPE, like a mask, gloves, and safety glasses, explaining why each item is important.
- **Pretend Dentist Dress-Up:** Invite a student to dress up as a dentist with a gown, mask, eye protection, and gloves. Have them “count” the teeth on a puppet patient, then let classmates take turns being the dentist. Discuss how dentists might look different when wearing protective gear, but they’re there to help.

Healthy Eating Activities

- **Healthy Drink Game:** Read *Potter the Otter* and discuss favorite drinks. Use empty 16 oz soda bottles like Coke, Fanta, Mountain Dew, tea, bottled water, and apple juice for a game where children guess which drinks are best for their teeth.
- **Happy Tooth vs. Sad Tooth Sorting:** Provide two bags—one for “healthy” and one for “unhealthy” food choices. Use visual markers like a happy tooth for the healthy bag and a sad tooth with a cavity for the unhealthy bag. Have children place props (like empty drink bottles or plastic foods) in the appropriate bags.
- **Food Choice Sorting from Cavity Free Kids:** Use large brown paper bags with smiley and sad faces to represent healthy and unhealthy food choices. Let children sort plastic foods, empty drink containers, and snacks into the bags based on whether they’re good for teeth.

General Tips

- **Budget-Friendly Props:** If you don’t have puppets or model teeth, ask if the center has any tucked away—sometimes they have special oral health items for Dental Health Month.
- **Engaging Books:** Choose fun, science-based books about visiting the dentist, brushing teeth, or oral health. Make sure they include accurate information, like the correct amount of toothpaste to use, and avoid scary-sounding terms.