

Taking Care of Baby's Teeth

Newsletter 123
Provider Edition
February 2009

This Month's Theme: **Baby Teeth**

Poor dental hygiene can lead to all sorts of health problems as children grow into adults. Even child care providers need to help take care of baby's gums and teeth in the very early years.

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Teething is an important milestone in babies' lives. When teeth break through the gums, it signals us that infants are now ready to chew food; it's a natural time to begin feeding solid food if you haven't done so already. It's also time to make sure an infant has many safe things to chew on like teething rings. Their urge to chew increases as their baby teeth emerge. You may be surprised that it's also time to begin brushing using a soft toothbrush. Good dental hygiene should begin as soon as an infant's teeth break through the gums. This, along with good nutrition and regular dental visits will help a child develop strong teeth and a well balanced jaw, a major factor in the prevention of later dental problems.

According to The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, before teeth emerge, caregivers should begin taking care of baby's gums. Wipe gums very gently with a damp, soft cloth. This not only decreases the sugars which feed the bacteria in the baby's mouth, the routine prepares him for brushing once his teeth emerge. When this happens, parents should purchase two soft infant tooth brushes and begin brushing their infant or toddler's new teeth morning and night. The other brush should be deliv-



ered to child care and used, with your guidance, if your child care group naps after lunch or snack. Toddlers should brush before lying down so there are no food particles lying in their mouths.

Avoiding Cavities

Cavities can start early and even nursing does not protect a baby's teeth from decaying. The following practices at child care will help prevent the development of cavities.

1. Once teeth emerge it's time to stop feeding babies to sleep. This is difficult at first, but letting milk stay, whether from bottle or breast, on a baby's teeth will cause "nursing cavities." After bottle feeding and

before napping, brush baby's teeth.

2. Do not let toddlers walk around with cups of milk or juice.

Some children tend to want to sip all day. If this is the case make sure you make a hard and fast rule that toddlers can only carry water in a bottle or cup when they leave the table. Juice or milk is for meals or snacks. This not only will save their teeth, it may save your carpet. The AAPD recommends that you switch bottle feeding babies to cups between the ages of twelve and fourteen months. This may discourage the constant walking with the bottle.

3. Give babies appropriate toys to suck on to pacify them during teething. Cool teething rings or cool rags seem to work well for most babies. Remove pacifiers and bottles if a child begins to chew on the nipples. They can actually be chewed with sharp baby teeth and pieces can be swallowed.
4. Avoid soda all together. Soda not only leads to cavities, it can cause childhood obesity. Milk and water should be the predominant drinks served at child care. Fruit juice should be limited to 4 - 6 ounces per day.
5. Candy, cookies, ice cream and other sweets should also be limited. If you do give children a treat make sure they don't nap without brushing their teeth.

Calcium, Magnesium and Vitamin D

The chart in the next column shows the 2009 recommended daily allowances for calcium and vitamin D for young children. The requirements for magnesium are

half as much as the calcium. A child needing 800 mg of calcium, needs 400 mg of magnesium.

| Age | Calcium | Vitamin D |
|-------|---------|-----------|
| 1 - 3 | 500 mg | 400 IU |
| 4 - 8 | 800 mg | 400 IU |

These nutrients are vital for the development of teeth and bones. Children can get all the calcium they need from mothers' milk or formula and then later from dairy products, dark green vegetables, almonds, black eyed peas, green peas and oranges or orange juice. If dairy does not agree with one of the children, there are many alternative products available which are supplemented with calcium. These substitutions should be discussed with the child's family. Make sure you design your child care menus to include plenty of calcium rich foods.

Parents should discuss the new vitamin D recommendations and whether or not their child needs a vitamin supplement with their doctor, but you can play your part by making sure children get plenty of sunshine. The sun actually helps children's bodies make vitamin D. However, this won't work if they are always covered with sunscreen. Allow children to play freely without sunscreen outdoors in the early morning or late afternoon. You MUST still avoid having their skin burn. Between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. make sure they have adequate sun protection. Parents know their child's tolerance best. Discuss sun exposure with them to come up with a plan for their child. Keep in mind a brown or tan brunette can withstand much more exposure than a pale blond or redhead.

Conveniently, paler skin produces Vitamin D faster and in greater quantities than dark skin. So the paler the skin the less exposure a child needs to get adequate Vitamin D. Darker skinned children need more exposure but can also take more exposure without burning.

Teeth are bones. When children have bad teeth or are not getting the nutrition they need to produce strong teeth, they are also not getting what they need to produce strong bones. If you notice a child is not caring for his teeth, refer his parents to the AAPD website (page 5) for information. Many people are still under the impression that because baby teeth fall out, they are not important. Most parents will appreciate being informed that this thinking has changed.

Teach About Teeth

It may seem like toothbrushing is a parental responsibility. However, you can be very helpful to parents especially if their child is not taking kindly to their efforts to have them brush their teeth. To a child, just knowing that his peers brush their teeth can be powerfully persuasive. Make toothbrushing before nap a group event, just like washing hands before eating. Read some of the books on page three and have the children find other books at the library about teeth. Get a mirror and have them count their own and each other's teeth. You can even count the dog's teeth if he's game. Parents will be thrilled



that you're helping them teach their child good health care habits.

Teaching About Teeth

The Tooth Book by Dr. Seuss

No list of “tooth” books would be complete without this classic. The Tooth Book brings a bit of humor to an otherwise dry subject. From crocodiles to a trapeze artist swinging by his pearly whites, teeth are the central focus of the comical illustrations. The Seussical rhyme is perfect for reading aloud. The last verse reads, “AND WHEN YOU GET YOUR SECOND SET, THAT’S ALL THE TEETH YOU’LL EVER GET!” leaving a not-so-subtle message about the importance of taking care of your own thirty two. (ages 2 - 8)

How Many Teeth by Paul Showers

Part of the Let’s-Read-And-Find-Out Science Series, this is a non-fiction book about teeth. When you get them, how many, what they’re for, how to care for them and what it’s like to lose them is all explained using easy to understand diagrams imbedded in illustrations of happy people using their teeth. This is good information presented in a child-friendly way for toddlers who have simple questions that need simple answers. (ages 2 - 5)

Grandpa’s Teeth by Rod Clement

Anyone who’s ever had a parent or grandparent with false teeth knows just how important those teeth are to their owner. One morning this Grandpa wakes up to find his teeth missing. The author plays up this personal tragedy getting the family involved, then the police, who open a full fledged investigation, including a police lineup of smiling, less than reputable citizens. Finally everyone in the town feels paranoid and begins to walk around with a silly grin just to prove each has his own teeth in his mouth. Only after the townspeople all chip in to purchase Grandpa a new set of teeth, does the reader find out what happened to the dentures. The explanation is just as funny as the rest of the book. (ages 4 - 8)

Throw Your Tooth on the Roof by Selby B. Beeler

Every culture has developed traditions about what to do with all those baby teeth lost by children all over the world. This book is divided into geographical sections in order to help organize all the different rituals, including the tooth fairy, and my favorite from the Aboriginal people of Australia, who place their baby teeth in shoots of the pandanus plant. These eventual grow into trees and the spirits in the pandanus trees look after the child while the new tooth grows in. Some of these traditions are so fun you may want to incorporate them into the traditional American tooth fairy ritual. At the end of the book, some good factual information about teeth is supported with labeled illustrations. (ages 4 - 9)



Charming Opal by Holly Hobbie

Oh, that Opal is charming. She is just the picture of piggy femininity in her lovely white dress and bonnet and just the cutest in her ruffled yellow bikini. She is having a delightful time gracefully swinging from a rope into the watering hole with her friends Toot and Puddle. But while doing so, she loses her tooth. Opal is heartbroken that she won’t be able to put the tooth under her pillow. Lo and behold, Toot snorkels to the bottom of the pond and finds it for her. But in the evening Puddle begins to worry. What if the Tooth Fairy doesn’t come to visit. Opal would be so disappointed. So Puddle dresses as the tooth fairy, but unfortunately falls asleep before he can fulfill his duties. This is a lovely illustration of what it means to be a good friend. (ages 3 - 7)

**Happy
Valentines
Day**

Teaching About Teeth Activities

Brush Your Teeth Chant by Raffi

from Singable Songs for the Very Young

If you get up in the morning at a quarter to one
and you want to have a little fun,
You brush your teeth ch ch ch ch, ch ch ch ch....

If you get up in the morning at a quarter to two
and you want to find something to do,
You brush your teeth ch ch ch ch, ch ch ch ch....

If you get up in the morning at a quarter to three
and you want to hum a tweedle dee dee,
You brush your teeth ch ch ch ch, ch ch ch ch....

If you get up in the morning at a quarter to four
and you think you hear a knock at the door,
You brush your teeth ch ch ch ch, ch ch ch ch....

If you get up in the morning at a quarter to five
and you just can't wait to come alive,
You brush your teeth ch ch ch ch, ch ch ch ch....

Sparkle Teeth

Sparkle, sparkle, little teeth,
Some above and some beneath.
Brush them all at every meal,
Clean and fresh they'll always feel.
Sparkle, sparkle, little teeth,
Some above and some beneath.

Brush Your Teeth

Brush, brush, brush your teeth.
Keep them clean each day.
Then you'll have a pretty smile,
And healthy teeth all day.

Teaching Children to Brush

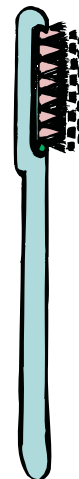
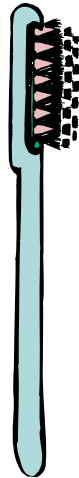
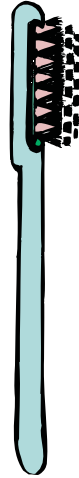
Before you attempt to teach children to brush their own teeth, observe them at meal time. If a child can manipulate a small fork, successfully getting the food into his mouth, he should have the motor coordination to use a small tooth brush.

Make sure you have a safe child-proof stool so toddlers can see in the mirror. Have their parents bring their toothbrush and their choice of toothpaste to child care. When it's time to brush, put a small dab of toothpaste on each child's brush, hand it to them and allow them to brush their own teeth. They will be uncoordinated at first. Watch to see what areas they are missing and then ask if you can get those spots. In the beginning this will be a shared experience. As you see children develop more coordination, gradually move them towards tooth brushing independence. The reinforcement at child care will make brushing at home easier for parents.

Be watchful of a few things.

- Make sure children spit out the toothpaste. Even though children's toothpaste does not contain fluoride, you want them to get into the habit of spitting so they do so when they are using fluoridated paste.
- Make sure they are actually brushing their teeth and not their gums. This may take some practice, but they'll get it soon.
- Always stay with very young children when brushing. Mistakes can happen and they can choke on their toothbrush.
- Make sure children brush for a complete two minutes. Use a timer of their choosing to help.

Visit the American Academy of Pediatric Dentists at www.aapd.org for more information on childhood dentistry.



Happy Valentines Day

Valentines

Valentines, red, white and pink
I'll find a pretty one for you.
This one's yours I think.

Your Mailbox

The Valentine Mailbox is a great activity for toddlers because it exposes them to writing as a form of communication. Buy an economy pack of little Valentines Day cards or just cut up some white, pink and red construction paper. Have children pretend write on the cards, making one for each friend and at the end of the day place the cards in a shoebox. The next day check to make sure everyone has a card and open them. If you'd like, sing the Valentine song below to begin the activity. You can continue this daily until the group tires of the mailbox.

Some children will pretend-write and even pretend read their cards. Others will ask you to write what they want to say. Either way children are getting to know what it feels like to write. Some toddlers will begin to show interest in writing their name. Have their name printed in large block letters on the wall, so they can copy it down when they are ready.

I'm a Little Valentine

I'm a little valentine, red and white.
With ribbons and lace,
What a beautiful sight.

I can say, "I love you,"
On Valentines Day.
Just put me in an envelope
And give me away!

Vicki Claybrook

Red + White = Pink

It's time to teach toddlers about red, white and pink. Do all your existing preschool art activities in red, white and pink for the entire month. By February 28th everyone will be able to identify these colors.

1. If the children play with clay, swap out any color but red, white and pink. Have them use rollers and heart shaped cookie cutters to make valentines hearts.
2. Remix your collage box and make sure everything inside is this month's colors and can be glued to paper. Valentines month is the best month for collages. Fill your box with scraps, stickers, lace, valentine cutouts, ribbon, yarn or even chocolate kiss wrappers and let the children create freely. Make plenty of heart shaped bases out of construction paper for the children to glue on.
3. Take out your red and white tempera paint and have the children mix it up to make pink. See how many shades they can come up with.
4. Find every Crayola shade of red and pink crayon, marker, chalk or colored pencils. Have them color on white construction paper.

I Spy Color Game

Play an easy game of I SPY. When the children become familiar with the colors, red, pink and white, gather in a group and say, "I SPY something red" and see if the children can find it. Keep it very simple and if they bring something of another color, just identify the color and send them back for something red. They learn just as much from their mistakes as they do from finding a "red" item. Repeat using the colors pink and white. If you'd like, hide hearts cut out from the different colors to make it as easy as possible.



Valentine Pink Strawberry Muffins



- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 pint fresh strawberries | ¾ cup sugar |
| 1¾ cups all purpose flour | ⅓ cup butter or walnut oil |
| 1 teaspoon baking soda | 2 eggs |
| 1 teaspoon salt | ⅓ cup water or milk |
| ¼ teaspoon baking powder | 1 muffin pan with muffin cup liners |

- Crush enough strawberries to make 1 cup of puree. Pour the puree into a small pot and cook for one minute, stirring constantly. Slice the remaining strawberries to use as decorations.
- In a medium bowl combine the flour, baking soda, salt, and baking powder.
- In a large bowl cream the sugar, butter or walnut oil and then the eggs.
- Add the flour mixture and then the strawberries. Pour into the muffin tins distributing the batter evenly.
- Bake at 400 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes or until a pick inserted in the center of one muffin comes out clean.
- When cool, top with strawberry cream cheese. (Recipe below)

Strawberry Cream Cheese

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 16 oz cream cheese | ½ - 1 cup strawberry jam |
|--------------------|--------------------------|

Warm the cream cheese to room temperature. Mix the jam with the cream cheese, starting with ½ cup of jam and increasing the amount of jam to your taste.

Someone is Celebrating Somewhere in the World

All February-African American History Month - celebrates the contributions African Americans have had in American culture.

February 9 - China Lantern Day - officially ends the Chinese new year.

February 16 - Presidents Day - celebrates the contributions and birthdays of all our presidents past and present.

February 27- Carnival in the Dominican Republic - A special time for Dominicans to celebrate their culture, go to parties, dance in the street, participate in parades, eat and drink, wear costumes and have fun with the locals and tourists.

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