



Dental Health Foundation
Ireland

Junior Lesson Plan 3

Dental Health

Objective

To develop pupils' understanding of dental hygiene and the importance of a healthy balanced diet for good dental health.

Duration: **30 minutes** (approximately).



Curricular Links

SPHE:

Myself ⇨ Taking care of my body ⇨ Knowing about my body / Food and nutrition

Words of the Day

Plaque – A sticky substance that is made of up of the bacteria that cause tooth decay.

Enamel – Enamel is the hard outer surface of the tooth which covers and protects the teeth.

Tooth Decay – When we eat or drink something that contains sugar, acids are produced in the mouth. These acids are produced by bacteria living in the dental plaque on the surface of the teeth. The acids start to break down the enamel surface of the tooth causing decay.



Class Discussion

Inform pupils that you will be learning about dental care. Ask pupils what they understand by this term. Explain that it means looking after the mouth, teeth and gums. Ask pupils to indicate their gums.

As a class, discuss 1) why dental care is important and 2) how to have good dental hygiene. For example:

1 Why is dental hygiene important?

- Poor dental hygiene can cause toothache, tooth decay or sore gums.
- Poor dental hygiene can cause bad breath.
- Good dental hygiene when you're young is a great start to having good strong teeth when you're older.
- Teeth are important for eating, talking and smiling.

Explain tooth decay (see words of the day for definition). Luckily, the mouth has its own in-built defence against tooth decay. About 20 minutes after eating or drinking something sugary, if no more sugar is taken, the acid begins to neutralise and the tooth surface is restored to normal. This is why it is important not to eat sugary drinks or snacks between meals.

2 How to have good dental care:

- Eat healthy meals and snacks.
- Eat dairy products like milk, natural yogurt and cheese (low-fat varieties recommended) as they are great sources of calcium, which helps to keep teeth healthy.
- Avoid sugary snacks such as sweets, chocolate, biscuits and sugary drinks. Snacking on foods which have lots of sugar can lead to tooth decay.
- Clean your gums and teeth properly.
- Brush your teeth twice daily.



Pair Discussion

Read aloud the following questions about dental hygiene and ask pupils to confer in pairs, then come together as a class and discuss (answers in brackets below).

- 1 How often do you think you should brush your teeth? (Twice a day)
- 2 How should you brush your teeth? (Procedure outlined below)
- 3 How long should you brush your teeth for? (2-3 minutes)

Outline procedure for brushing teeth:

- Get help to brush your teeth.
- Brush two teeth at a time (width of the toothbrush head).
- Count to ten for every two teeth you brush.
- Brush gums and teeth with a toothbrush and toothpaste in a gentle circular motion. (see pictures)
- Brush top and bottom teeth.
- Brush outside of teeth and gums, inside of teeth and gums and biting surface.
- Spit out after brushing – no rinsing.



Group Activity

Ask pupils to work in groups. Give each group a copy of the 'Top Tooth Tips' activity sheet, asking them to match the sentences from A and B, completing the 8 sentences. After some time, discuss as a class.

Top Tooth Tips - Solution

- A1. B5.** Always brush your teeth twice a day, at bedtime and one other time during the day. Clean every tooth.
- A2. B7.** Use a soft / medium toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste to brush your teeth.
- A3. B8.** Brushing your teeth properly should take 2-3 minutes (about the length of a song).
- A4. B1.** Spit, don't rinse.
- A5. B6.** Never eat or swallow toothpaste.
- A6. B2.** Change your toothbrush when the bristles are worn.
- A7. B4.** Get help with brushing. You will need help brushing your teeth just as you need help tying your shoes or washing your hair.
- A8. B3.** When brushing it is important to clean every tooth.

Extension Activities

- 1 Ask pupils in groups to design a poster with a checklist for taking care of their teeth.
- 2 Ask pupils to write instructions for brushing teeth using a comic book style.

Bring it Home

Encourage your pupils to take home the message of the importance of a healthy balanced diet for good dental health. As a homework activity, you can ask your pupils to:

- 1 List the food they have at home which is good for teeth.
- 2 For a week, record how often they brush their teeth and check how well they did.

