

THE ORAL HEALTH EXPERT

School is back in session, and it's a good time to make sure kids brush up on their oral health lessons, too! Create fun games, incorporate the Tooth Fairy and teach kids the importance of eating smile-friendly foods.

DELTA DENTAL OF ARIZONA

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How to Help Your Child Prep for the First Lost Tooth



August can be a big time of the year for children going back to school – but it's also a big time of year for the Tooth Fairy! National Tooth Fairy Day is on August 22, and to celebrate, you can prep your little ones for losing their baby teeth. Most kids lose their first baby tooth around the age of 6, ¹ so it could easily happen at school (or daycare) when you're not around to help. Here are a few items you might want to discuss with your child:

Losing baby teeth is part of growing up and doesn't hurt.

When a tooth naturally falls out, it might tingle or feel different than normal. But there's no pain and there's no reason to be scared. ²

There may be bleeding.

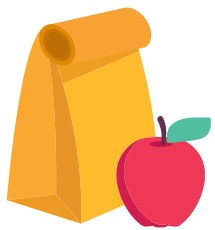
Even though losing a tooth doesn't hurt, there could be a bit of blood on the gums and tooth. A quick rinse with some water is all that's needed. ³

A teacher or helper can store the tooth.

Be sure to let your child know to alert a teacher or helper when the tooth comes out. This adult can help your child clean up and store the lost tooth in a cup, envelope or baggie to bring home.

Swallowing a tooth is OK.

It's not uncommon for a tooth to accidentally get swallowed, especially if it comes loose while eating. Assure your child that swallowing a tooth is not a big deal. The Tooth Fairy knows that the tooth fell out — it's part of her magic — and she will still stop by for a visit. ⁴



School Lunch Can Pack a Sugar Punch



Many parents think packing a brown bag lunch for their child is a healthier option than sticking with the school lunch menu. That can be true – as long as you’re mindful about the items you include! Try these easy swaps to reduce the amount of sugar in your child’s packed lunch.

1. Say no to sugar.

Ditch the regular cups of applesauce and grab a natural version with no added sugar or opt for a scoop of calcium-packed cottage cheese.⁵ Throw some blueberries or sliced strawberries on top of the cottage cheese for an added treat!

2. Opt for real fruit.

Fruit snacks may seem like a good idea – after all, many of them use real fruit juice. But fruit snacks and fruit leathers are gummy and sticky, which means bits of them will cling to teeth long after lunch is over. Over time, this can lead to cavities. Pack real fruit, such as a banana, clementine or apple slices, instead.⁶

3. Choose plain milk.

Drinking any kind of milk will help kids reach their recommended daily amount of calcium, which helps build strong teeth. But getting them to drink plain instead of chocolate- or strawberry-flavored milk will help decrease the amount of sugar in their lunches.

If you’re in the habit of throwing in a package of crackers or a bag of chips as a side snack, you may want to reconsider. Starchy foods break down into glucose just like candy and cookies. So even if the food doesn’t seem inherently sweet, they have the same results. Looking for nutritional alternatives with some crunch? Try sunflower seeds, almonds, baby carrots and popcorn.⁷

SMILE STATS



The Tooth Fairy has forgotten to pick up a tooth at least once in 35% of homes.⁸



Only 28% of American parents would give their kids an “A” grade for oral health.⁹



More than 30% of parents said their children between the ages of 6 and 12 had to miss school due to an oral health problem.¹⁰

Teachable Teeth



As always, summer has flown by, and it's back to school time again. As your kids gear up to learn about reading, writing and arithmetic, it's a great time to add an oral health "lesson plan"! Here are a few activities for young children.

Tooth Trivia

Oral health is pretty fascinating – especially if you spin it the right way! For example, you can tell your child that teeth are like tiny superheroes: small but incredibly mighty. Incisors can exert 30 to 50 pounds of pressure, and molars can bear down with more than 200 pounds of force. ¹¹

Fake Flossing

To demonstrate flossing techniques, grab a large Duplo-style building block from the toy box and put modeling clay between the pegs. The clay simulates plaque and food stuck between teeth. ¹² Next, have kids use floss or yarn to remove the clay, showing them proper techniques for flossing. ¹³ Here are a few tips to provide:

- Get between each set of teeth.
- Curve floss into a "C" shape against one "tooth" and slide it up and down, making sure to clean the space between the "gum" and the "tooth."
- Now do the same to the other "tooth" in the space.
- Move to the next set of "teeth" and do it all over again.
- Don't forget the back sides!

Mouth Portrait

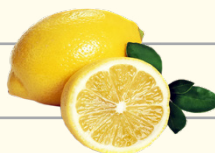
Have your child use a small mirror and a flashlight to check out the inside of his or her mouth, and then lead a mini anatomy lesson. Be sure to point out the gums, the tongue and all of the different types of teeth: incisor, canines, premolars and molars. After the anatomy lesson, switch to art – grab crayons, markers or even clay and have your child make a mouth self-portrait.

MOUTH-HEALTHY RECIPE: SUGAR-FREE GRAPE JELLY

Ingredients:



1 ½ cups
unsweetened grape juice



1 teaspoon
fresh lemon juice



½ cup cold water



2 teaspoons gelatin

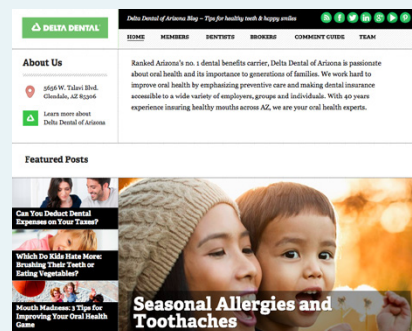
Directions:

Bring the grape and lemon juices to a boil, and then reduce heat and simmer for 4 minutes. Dissolve the gelatin in ½ cup cold water and add to the hot juice. Let cool, then pour into a 2-cup jar and refrigerate for up to two weeks.

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SOURCES

¹<http://oralhealth.deltadental.com/Search/22,21561n>

²<http://www.parents.com/kids/hygiene/tooth-care/loose-baby-tooth-advice-from-dentists/>

³<http://www.parents.com/kids/hygiene/tooth-care/loose-baby-tooth-advice-from-dentists/>

⁴<http://www.parents.com/kids/hygiene/tooth-care/loose-baby-tooth-advice-from-dentists/>

⁵<http://oralhealth.deltadental.com/Search/22,Delta34>

⁶<http://oralhealth.deltadental.com/Search/22,Delta34>

⁷<http://oralhealth.deltadental.com/Search/22,Delta34>

⁸<http://www.theoriginaltoothfairypoll.com/tooth-news/>

⁹2015 Delta Dental Children's Oral Health Report

¹⁰2015 Delta Dental Children's Oral Health Report

¹¹<http://oralhealth.deltadental.com/Search/22,HD10>

¹²<http://sugarspiceandglitter.com/teach-children-floss-teeth-play-dough/>

¹³<http://oralhealth.deltadental.com/Search/22,Delta40>