

Teaching Family and Friends In Your Community

Old people can remember when there were fewer problems with teeth and gums. Children's teeth were stronger and adults kept their teeth longer.

Times are changing. Today there are more tooth and gum problems than ever before. In many countries, tooth decay and gum disease are two of the fastest growing health problems.

This unhealthy situation is getting worse, for two reasons: changes in the kind of food people now are eating, and not enough cleaning after they eat.

BEFORE, the food people ate was their own, grown and prepared by themselves.



Even sugar cane was not as bad as the sticky candy children eat today. The sugar was bad for the teeth, but the fiber in the cane helped rub them clean.

NOW, more people are buying softer and sweeter food from the store. This kind of food sticks to the teeth more easily so it has more time to attack the teeth and gums.



Everyone must be more careful to clean away soft, sweet food. But many people do not know how. Some, especially children, do not even try.

Many people do not understand that tooth and gum problems are caused by certain kinds of food, and poor cleaning of the teeth. In fact, some have a completely different belief.



Do not attack a belief because it is traditional. Many traditions are more healthy than 'modern' things. Often, instead of telling people that their belief is wrong, you can remind them of a different tradition that is healthy.

Help your family and friends to recognize their healthy traditions. Then help them find new ways to use these same traditions for better health.



BE A GOOD EXAMPLE

Other people like to watch what you do before they try something different. First show members of your family and then they will be an example to others in your community. For example:

1. Instead of buying all your foods from the store, buy fresh fruits and vegetables from the market. It is even better to grow food in your own garden.



Learn to use several different kinds of foods in each meal. Mixing foods is a healthy idea. Invite friends to share your meals and see the number of different foods you have at each meal.

2. Do not buy fizzy drinks like Coca-Cola or Fanta. They have a lot of added sugar which quickly makes children's teeth rotten.

Also, do not sweeten your child's milk or tea.

When she is young she can learn to enjoy drinks that are not sweet.

Clean, cool water, tea with little sugar, milk, or water from a young coconut are best to drink. Fresh fruits are delicious when you are thirsty.



Most important: do not give your child a feeding bottle, especially one with a sweet drink inside. (See page 3.)



3. Keep your children's teeth clean. Your friends will notice clean teeth or teeth that are dirty or have cavities. **Remember, clean teeth are healthy teeth.**

An older child can clean his own teeth if you show him how.

A younger child cannot. He needs help. Each day someone older should clean his teeth for him (page 16).

When you teach, remember that as others learn, they too become teachers. Each person can teach another.

Encourage people to pass along what you have taught. Mothers can teach family and friends. Students can talk at home with brothers, sisters, and older family members.

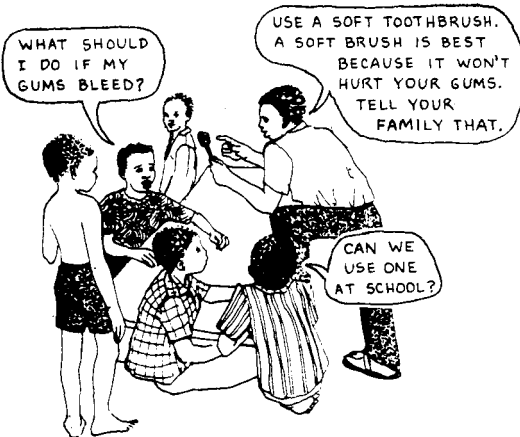
FROM THE HEALTH CLINIC ...



... TO THE HOME



... TO THE SCHOOL ...



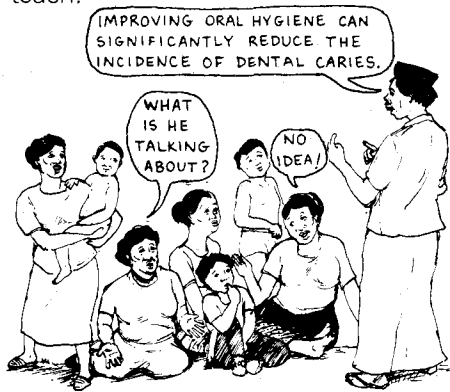
... TO THE HOME



If all learners become teachers, a simple message can begin in the health clinic or school and reach many more people at home.

FINDING THE BEST WAY TO TEACH

Deciding **what** to teach is important, but just as important is **how** to teach.



Learning cannot take place when you use words that people do not understand. They will learn something only when they see how it is related to their lives.

Remember this when you teach about eating good food and keeping teeth clean. Design your own health messages, but be ready to change them if people are not understanding or accepting what you say.

Here are five suggestions for teaching well.

1. Learn First From the People

Get involved in your community's activities. Learn about people's problems, and then offer to help solve them. People will listen to you when they know that you care about them and want to help.

Sit and talk with people. Learn about their customs, traditions and beliefs. **Respect them.**

Learn about their health habits. Improving health may require changing some habits and strengthening others.

Learn also about tooth decay and gum disease in your community.



Make people smile—then look into their mouths.

Find out how many children and adults are having problems with their teeth and gums. Do a survey such as the one on p. 176.

2. Build New Ideas Onto Old Ones

People find their own ways to stay healthy. Many traditions are good, helpful, and worth keeping. But some are not.

When you teach, start with what people already understand and are doing themselves. Then add new ideas.

This method of teaching is called 'association of ideas'. It helps people to understand new ideas because they can compare them with what they already are doing.

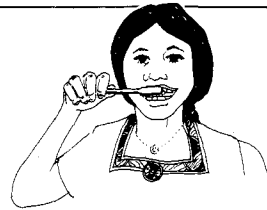
In this way people can more easily accept, remember, and do what you suggest.

A HEALTHY TRADITION — builds — **NEW IDEAS AND WAYS**



Just as sweeping the compound makes it a clean and healthy place to live.

————— in the
same way —————>



Brushing the teeth and gums keeps them clean and healthy.



A small child cannot find his own lice. Mother knows she must help him.

————— in the
same way —————>

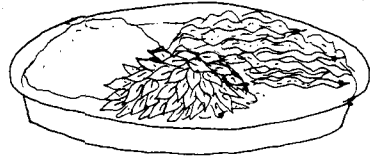


A small child cannot see the food on his teeth. He needs help with that also.



Different vegetables when planted together—like maize and yams—help each other to grow.

————— in the
same way —————>



Eating different kinds of food helps people to grow. Eating them several times a day makes your teeth and gums, as well as your whole body, grow stronger.

3. Keep Your Messages Short and Simple

Instead of partially teaching too many things, it is better to discuss a few things well. After learning what health problems the people feel are greatest, decide **what** information will help them solve these problems. Then think of **how** to share the information. Try to:

- **Use simple words** (see page 13). If you must use a big word, take the time to explain it.
- **Teach people when they are ready to learn.** A sick person, for example, usually wants to know how to prevent his sickness from returning. He will remember what you tell him.
- **Repeat the most important message many times.** Whenever you teach about staying healthy, remember to emphasize eating good food and keeping teeth clean. **Repetition helps people remember.**
- **Let people see what you mean.** See pages 24 to 32 for ways to use pictures, puppets, and plays.

4. Teach Wherever People Get Together

Knowing **where** to teach is sometimes as important as **how** you teach. Instead of asking people to come to a class you have organized, go to them. Look for ways to fit into their way of living. You both will gain from the experience. They will ask more questions, and you will learn how to work with people to solve problems.

Talk with people where they gather near their homes.

Talk to women at health clinics, in the market, and at their church meetings.



Talk to men as they sit together and discuss important issues. Also go to their business and farming meetings.

Teach men and women at reading groups.

5. Teach Something People Can Do Right Away

It is good to tell a mother to keep her child's teeth clean, but it is better to show her how to do it. She will remember how if she actually watches you clean her child's teeth.

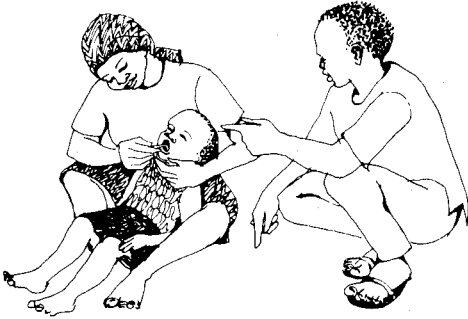
An even better way for a mother to learn is to let her clean her child's teeth while you watch. **A person discovers something for herself when she does it herself.**



Pick out a child and clean his teeth yourself. Let his mother watch.

Use a soft brush (or for a baby, a clean cloth). Gently but quickly brush or wipe his teeth. Do the best you can even if he cries.

If mothers make this into a habit, the child will expect to have his teeth cleaned and will soon cooperate—just the way he does to have lice removed from his hair.



Now let each mother clean her own child's teeth. Teach her to clean on top and on both sides of every tooth.



Ask her to do the same at home each day. At the next clinic, look at the children's teeth and see how well the mothers are doing. Give further help when needed. Always praise and encourage those who are doing well.