



## 4-H +Me = Health: Taking Good Care of Your Teeth

**What will we learn?** 4-H members will learn why teeth are important and how to take care of their teeth.

**Why is this important?** Good dental hygiene is a healthy habit that is good to learn at a young age.

**Prep time needed:** 10 minutes

**Activity length:** 15 minutes

**What will we need?**

*Preparation:*

- Soft bristle tooth brush
- Pan of water
- Toothpaste
- Dental floss
- Towel
- Timer

*At the meeting:*

- Room for one table

**What do I need to do?**

*Preparation:*

1. Purchase any necessary supplies.
2. Optional: Prepare a poster or display with pictures from magazines of healthy teeth and smiles.

*At the meeting:*

1. Provide members with some background information on why healthy teeth are important. Brushing and flossing teeth help prevent plaque from sticking to your teeth. When you eat, the plaque (a type of bacteria) breaks down the sugar from the foods you eat on your teeth. This turns the sugar into acids that eat away at the tooth enamel, causing holes we call cavities. If you don't take care of your teeth, cavities and unhealthy gums will make your mouth very sore. The two best ways to take care of your teeth are by brushing and flossing. There are many types and flavors of toothpaste to choose from, but always choose one with fluoride to help make your teeth strong and protect them from cavities.
2. Demonstrate how to properly brush your teeth to the club members. Be sure to set the timer for two minutes so members can see how long that actually takes. Explain that you should brush your teeth at least twice a day, after breakfast and before bed. Make sure you brush all of your teeth, making

sure you get the sides and back teeth. Spend at least two minutes brushing your teeth, and be sure to brush your tongue to help keep your breath fresh, too. Choose a soft-bristle brush and be sure to replace it every three months. Some toothbrushes even have bristles that change color when it's time for a new brush.

3. Next, demonstrate how to floss your teeth properly. Flossing is important to keep your teeth healthy. Slide the floss between each pair of teeth once a day. Flossing gets rid of hidden food your toothbrush can't reach.
4. Encourage members to visit their dentist twice a year for an examination and professional cleaning. Remember, it's not only important to keep your mouth healthy by brushing and flossing, it's also important to watch what you eat and drink. Eating fruits and vegetables and drinking water and milk instead of sugary drinks are a good start.

**Summary:** Taking the time to do the little things like brushing and flossing is critical to your overall health.

**What 4-H projects does this activity connect with:** Health and Nutrition

**Snack connection:** Serve low-fat yogurt or milk; high-calcium foods promote strong bones and teeth

**Resources:**

<http://www.kidshealth.org>

<http://teenshealth.org>