

HOW-TO GUIDE

ORAL HEALTH EDUCATION

FOR PREDENTAL CLUBS



Introduction

Even with proper access to affordable oral health care, some individuals may not understand the importance of oral health to overall health. This is often due to a lack of proper oral health education and oral health literacy. Oral health literacy represents the capacity of individuals, policy makers, and health care providers to obtain, understand, and use health information to make correct decisions.

Educational events provide a great opportunity for predental students to start interacting with the public about oral health topics, take a leadership role in their community and address an important dental public health issue.

Before the Event

First, your club will have to decide when you would like to hold the event. Do you want to visit during school hours or after school? It can be difficult to plan events during the day because of conflicting class schedules of committee members. In addition, you will have to determine what time of year you want to go. Some predental clubs visit the same classroom multiple times a year and are able to build relationships with the students and teachers.

After determining when you want to host an event, you will need to contact a school or program. If you'd like to visit an elementary school, you can contact local school districts to get in contact with teachers. Educational outreach, however, is not only focused towards young children. There is a huge lack of education amongst the special needs population so perhaps you can contact your state's Special Olympics program or special needs classrooms within schools. Another idea is to talk to high school sports coaches to promote mouthguard use amongst the athletes. Activity directors at nursing homes are also great people to contact because elderly people are often unaware of the importance of oral health, especially in the case of dentures. Once you have an idea of who you would like to contact, reach out. You may want to provide examples of activities you will do with the attendees.

Here is a template email to get you started:

Dear _____,

My name is _____ and I am a member of the University of _____'s Predental Club. Our organization focuses on preparing students for dental school. One of our main goals is to volunteer and give back to the community. One of the ways we like to do this is through educational outreach. There is a lack of oral health education among all age groups, and our goal is to change that. We would love to visit and teach your students about the importance of oral health through games and educational presentations.

If you are interested in having us visit, please let me know what days and times work with your schedule. I look forward to hearing back from you.

*Thank you for your time,
Predental Club's Educational Outreach Committee Member*

After you get a response, the next step is to discuss event logistics with the staff member you are planning the event with. Be sure to ask how many attendees there will be and their age range. Also, it is important to ask if there's a limit on how many committee members they would like there. Children often get nervous when a lot of new adults come into a room, so the teacher or supervisor may only want a couple predental students in a classroom at a time. Lastly, it is vital to confirm the location and times so your committee members can arrive on time and make a great first impression. Here is an example of what a response email might look like.

Dear _____,

Thank you so much for getting back to us. I have a few committee members who are interested in visiting that day. We can't wait! A few pieces of information that would help us are how many (students, athletes, kids, people, etc.) will be in attendance and the age ranges of these attendees. We'd like to know so we can plan appropriate activities. Also, let me know if there is a maximum number of committee members that you would like to be there. Finally, could you give me the specifics of your location so I can tell my members exactly where to go on the day of the event. We look forward to working with you.

*Thank you again for the opportunity,
Predental Club's Educational Outreach Committee Member*

At the Event

Deciding on activities to do and which handouts to give away in goodie bags can alter drastically depending on your audience. Make sure to consider the following questions when you are planning the activities in order to make them age and time appropriate.

- 1) How old are the children?
- 2) How many children will be at the event?
- 3) How much time do you have?

Next, you and your educational outreach committee will have to develop a schedule of games and presentations for the event. Take a look at successful educational outreach events put on by other predental clubs that are featured at the end of the guide. Feel free to organize your event based off of these examples or create an event all on your own! There are additional website links with resources for planning oral health education events in Appendix 1.

After the Event

Reflecting, assessing the impact, and receiving feedback on your outreach initiative is key to improving and developing new ideas for your program. Be open to receiving feedback on your initiatives and flexible to make adjustments as needed. Here are some tips for assessing the impact and gathering feedback on your initiative.

Assessing Impact

Make sure to accurately log all the information you can about your event in a central location accessible to individuals involved in your initiative (Google Docs, Dropbox, etc.). Record information such as the hours of service, location, number of volunteers and number of participants. You can even include general information about your participants, such as grade level, age group, and other general information.

You can also be creative with gauging how much your group learned, such as asking questions to the group as a whole. This is an especially important consideration with a younger audience that may be less receptive to taking a formal assessment.

Receiving Feedback

You should gather feedback on your project from the participants. Similar to assessing the impact of the initiative, you can creatively ask your outreach event attendees for feedback on the event. Depending on the age of your group, ask them at the end what they liked about the event and what they would suggest for improvements or administer a short feedback survey.

Create a standardized form to gain feedback from your event. In addition to asking your project participants, make sure to gain feedback from your event volunteers and the individuals in charge of the group you visited (i.e., teachers, staff coordinator). Clarify before the event with the staff and your group if you'd like to verbally get feedback or email the feedback form to the individuals in charge.

Oral Health Basics

Audience: Ages 2 - 4 (Early Child Care Center)

Time Needed: 1 hour

Event Details/Activities: Begin the event by discussing the basics of oral health and encourage conversations. The predental students focus on basic oral health concepts such as hygiene and anatomy. Ask the children questions such as:

- Where are your teeth?
- Why do we need teeth?
- When do you brush your teeth?
- Why do you brush your teeth? (to get rid of the sugar bugs!)
- Which foods make your teeth “happy”? (fruits and vegetables)
- Which foods make your teeth “sad”? (sugary snacks and drinks)

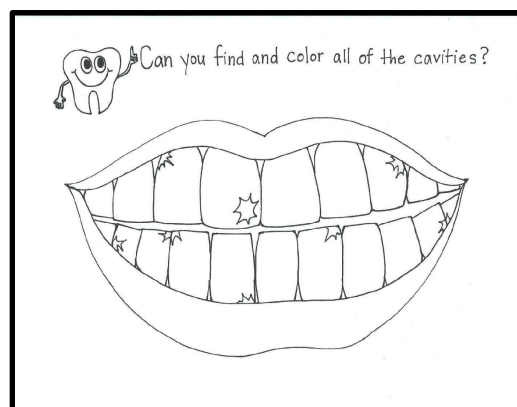
Since the children are so young, usually around three years old, the predental students’ main goal is to create a positive outlook on going to the dentist. Do this by incorporating games and hands-on activities into each lesson.

Your club can consider using an education puppet to demonstrate how to correctly brush. Each of the children are able to come up to “Allie the Alligator” to show how they brush their teeth. The predental students make sure to give feedback such as, “Make sure you get the back teeth.”

There are many great activity sheets on the internet that you can download for free to distribute at your event. Or, if you are feeling creative, you can design your own worksheets (see Appendix 2 for sample worksheets)!

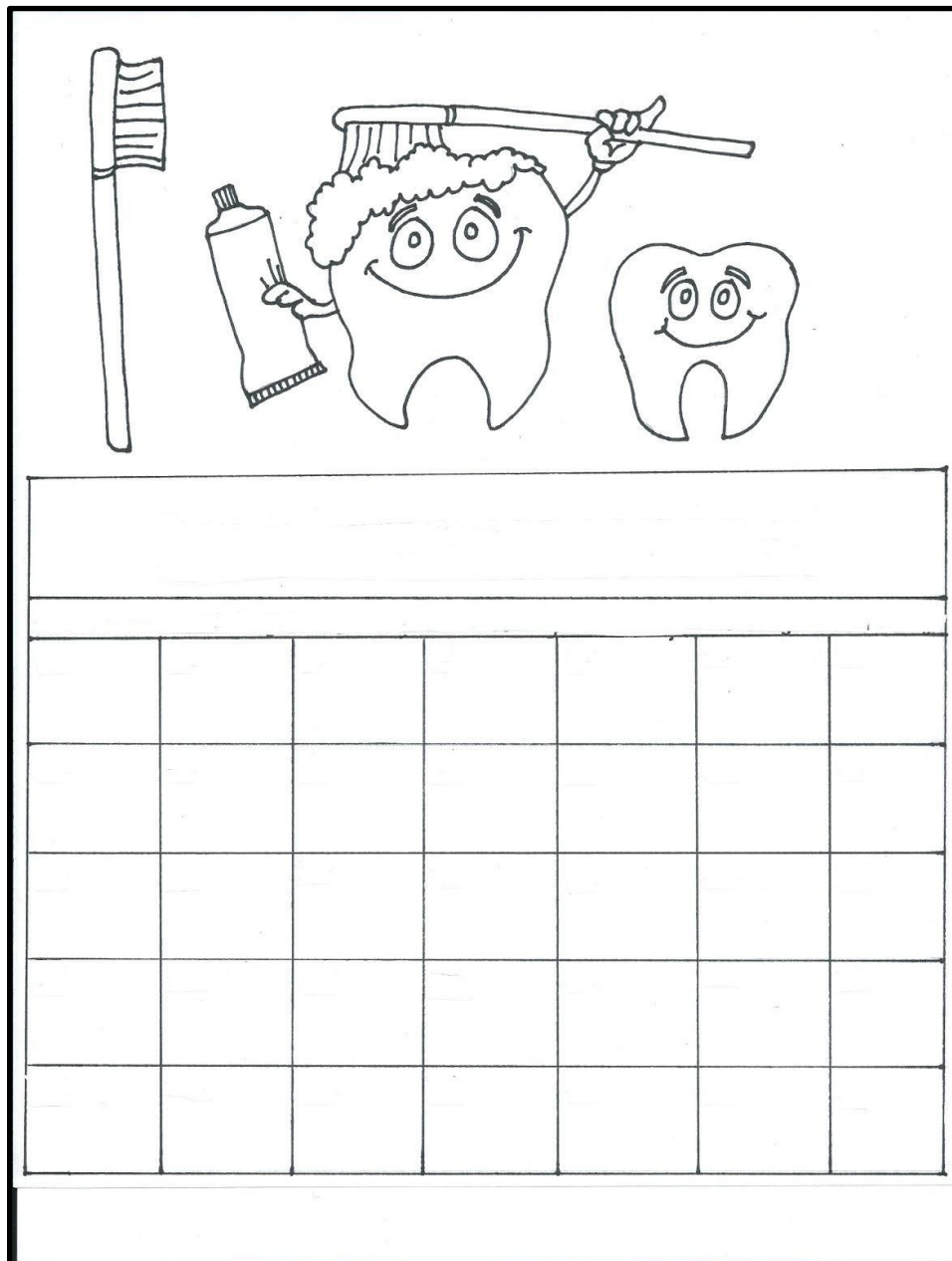
The children love to take an active role in their learning. The predental students help the children color in their worksheets and talk about relevant oral health topics.

If your club decides to do a coloring activity, make sure to provide crayons or ask the teacher when planning the event if it is okay to use the art supplies already in the classroom. More of these worksheets can be found in Appendix 2.



Goodie bags and handouts: Your club can consider handing out goodie bags including a child-sized toothbrush, toothpaste and floss. You club could purchase these items or work with a vendor to provide the items at no-cost.

Consider distributing an activity calendar where children can keep track of every day they brush. The predental students show the children how to color in each day that they brush their teeth twice. If your club is able to, it may be a good idea to provide stickers to mark each day, since it can be difficult for the young children to color within the lines.



Happy Teeth Program

Audience: Ages 5 – 12 of up to 50 students

Duration: 1 hour

Event Details/Activities: The Happy Teeth Program is a series of educational outreach events. Predental students visit the school nine times throughout each year.

The program provides an overview of basic dental anatomy, nutrition, cavities and oral hygiene to local elementary school students. There are approximately 25 children in each class and the predental students present to two classes at a time. The event is based on four stations that the students rotate through: dental anatomy, dental hygiene, cavities and nutrition.

The first station has the children examine a typodont (a type of tooth model) that the club purchased on Amazon.com. These models can be purchased for \$20 to \$50 depending on the make and model.

The second station focuses on oral hygiene by demonstrating and practicing brushing and flossing on a large model. The children each get a turn to practice.

The third station is the coloring activity station where the students color the different layers of the tooth: pulp, dentin, and enamel. There are other coloring picture on the worksheet, as well as crossword puzzles and mazes for the children to complete.

Lastly, the nutrition station consists of sorting healthy and unhealthy foods. For the nutrition sorting activity, the predental students bring in a magnet board with pictures of a “happy, clean smile” and a “sad, cavity-filled smile.” They give the children magnets with pictures of different vegetables, fruits or sweets on them and the students decide which smile to place the magnet on.

Goodie bags and handouts: Consider sending the children home with their activity sheets and a toothbrush.

Appendix 1: Additional Resources

There is no need to reinvent the wheel. There are many helpful resources available to your club when planning an oral education outreach event. Below are websites for some of these resources:

Children's Oral Health Institute - Lessons in a Lunch Box

<http://mycohi.org/lunchbox.html>

Colgate - Bright Smiles Bright Futures

<http://www.colgate.com/app/BrightSmilesBrightFutures/US/EN/Program-Materials/For-Educators.cvsp>

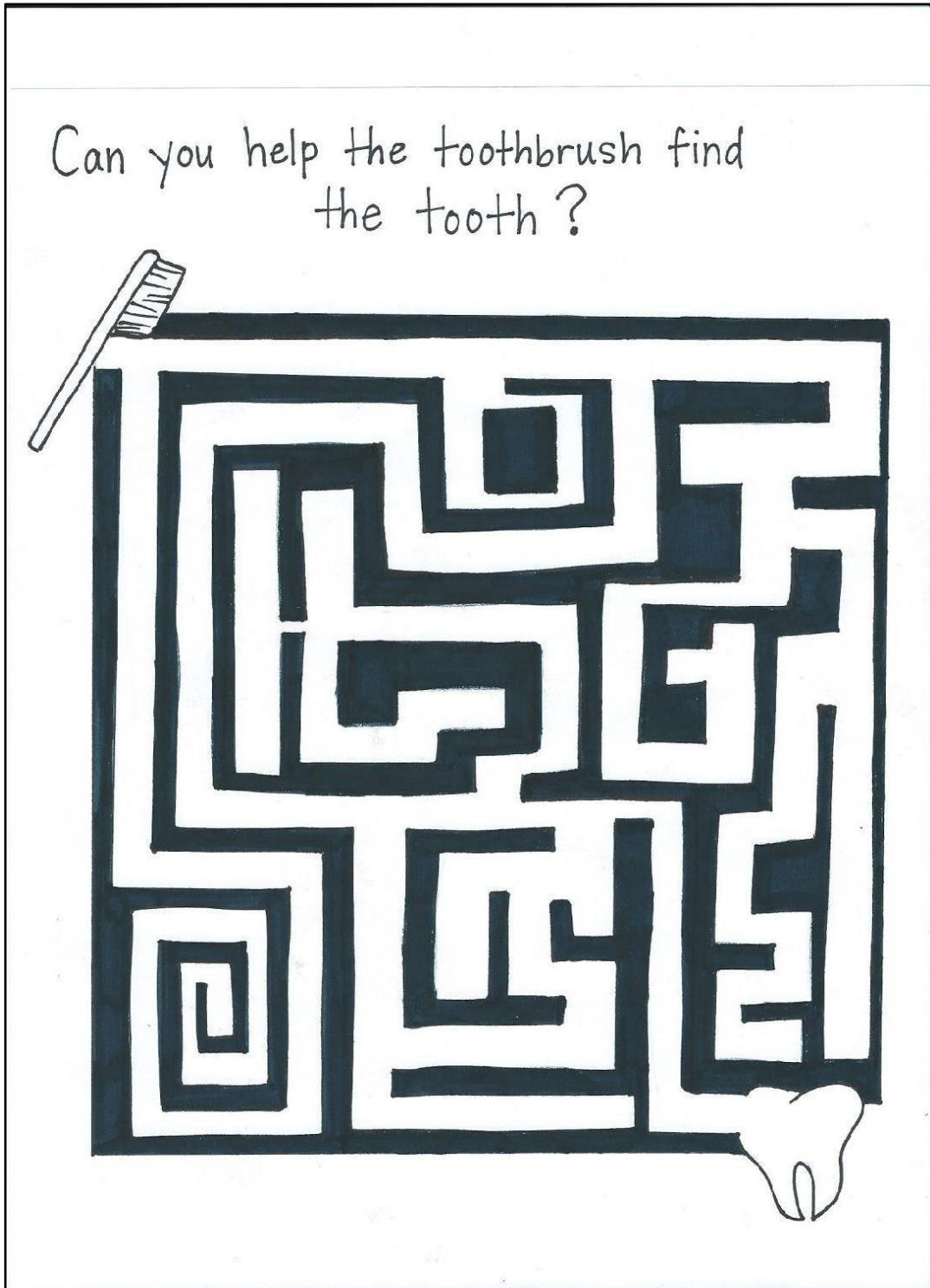
National Children's Oral Health Foundation - America's ToothFairy

<http://www.ncohf.org/resources>

Maine Department of Health, Oral Health Section

<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/population-health/odh/resources.shtml>

Appendix 2: Oral Health Activity Sheets



Can you find and color all of the cavities?

