

PRETEND DENTAL CLINIC

Oral health activity



Regular dental checkups are important throughout life.
Children should have their first oral health assessment by age 1.

To help children feel comfortable with visiting the dentist, we can prepare them for the sights, sounds and smells and what else to expect. Role playing can reinforce that knowledge and build familiarity. A puppet or toy can play the role of patient, to avoid little fingers getting in others' mouths!

What you need

- DHSV's tooth puppet (aka 'Chomper') or **other toys** to play dental patient
- Reclining chair or any flat surface for Chomper/teddy/doll to lie on



Optional extras:

- Toothbrush (for toys' teeth only!)
- Lab coat or white shirt
- Clear safety glasses (for the "dentist") and sunglasses (for the "patient")
- Paper towel as a dental bib
- Small torch
- Handheld dental mirror
- Face mask
- Disposable gloves

What to do

- Set up a "dental clinic" for dramatic play. (See ideas for props above.)
- Read *Berenstain Bears Visit the Dentist* (or another book from over the page)
- Talk about what the dentist does (see "Talking to children" section)
- Role play going to the dental clinic with a "dentist", "parent" (optional) and "patient". Let the children take turns role playing during free time.

Talking to children

- "Today we're going to talk about people who are tooth helpers – people who help us keep our teeth clean and healthy."
- Describe who children will meet at the dental clinic: the receptionist, the dentist, the dental assistant, etc.
- Talk about the sequence of events during a dental visit.
 - Getting in the chair, wearing a bib, reclining back with hands on stomach
 - Putting on sunglasses before the bright light is turned on
- "Dentists use a light or mirror to look at your teeth. The dentist and the dental assistant wear gloves so their fingers are clean when they touch your mouth. They might wear a mask over their face so they don't share germs."
- "The dentist will look in your mouth and count your teeth. You have 20 teeth by the time you are 3 or 4 years old."
- "Can you practise opening your mouth wide — ROAR! — so the dentist can see your teeth?"

MORE ACTIVITY IDEAS

Let's read a book

- **The Berenstain Bears Visit the Dentist**
by Stan & Jan Berenstain
- **Going to the Dentist** by Anne Civardi
- **Maisy, Charley and the Wobbly Tooth**
by Lucy Cousins
- **Do I Have to Go to the Dentist? A first look at healthy teeth** by Pat Thomas
- **Dentist Trip (Peppa Pig)** by Neville Astley

Sing 'The Dentist is my Pal'

To the tune of 'The Farmer in the Dell'

The dentist is my pal,
The dentist is my pal,
Her chair goes up (arms in the air)
and then goes down (touch the ground)
The dentist is my pal.

She has a waiting room,
With lots of things to do,
Books and toys for girls and boys
Are waiting there for you.

She has me open wide,
And then she looks inside,
Carefully she checks my teeth,
And keeps them shining bright.



Partner with a dental clinic

Contact a local dental clinic and share their contact information with families. Find out what support families need and see if you and the dental team can assist in setting up their first appointment.

What children are learning (links to the VEYLDF)

Outcome 3: Wellbeing

Children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing

Talking with families about dental visits

"Has your child had their teeth checked?"

- Early check-ups are the best way to prevent tooth decay. If tooth decay is caught early, it can be stopped or even reversed.
- Seeing the dentist for a check-up — when no treatment is needed — sets up a friendly and positive experience.
- Children often need time to get used to the new sights, sounds and smells at the dentist. It also gives you the chance to ask questions.

"Does your family have a regular dentist?"

You have two dental care options: public or private

- To find your nearest **public** dental clinic visit www.dhsv.org.au and click on 'Find your nearest dental clinic'.
- You may choose to attend a **private** dentist. Be sure to ask about fees first as they vary widely.

"Did you know that dental care is free or low cost for all children up to 12 years?"

- Dental care for children aged 0-12 years is free at a **public** dental clinic for healthcare card or pensioner concession card holders - for non-cardholders it's low cost.

"Do you feel anxious about visiting the dentist?"

- Anxiety can be catching; if a child notices their parent is afraid, they are likely to feel afraid too.
- Read books together about visiting the dentist and keep your comments positive.
- Avoid encouraging negative thoughts. It's unhelpful to say things like, "You need to be brave," or, "They're not going to hurt you."