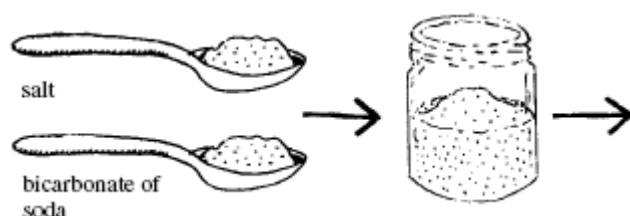


Dental Hygiene



Preparations:

- *Bring all materials needed for making a tooth brush:*
 - *Twig*
 - *Piece of cloth or towel*
 - *Small bag with salt or powdered charcoal*
 - *Small bag with bicarbonate of soda*

Why are teeth important for us?

Let the members discuss. They can come up with the following answers:

- Good for eating. Your teeth cut food into small pieces so that you can swallow and digest it better.
- Good health. Infection from a bad tooth can spread to other parts of your body.
- Good speech. Your tongue and lips touching the teeth help you make many sounds.
- Good breath. If you leave food around your teeth, your breath will smell bad.
- Good looks. Healthy teeth that look good help you feel good.

How can we take care of our teeth?

Let the members discuss. They might come up with the following answers:

- Avoid eating sweets
- Brush our teeth well every day

Do many people in our community clean their teeth?

*If the answer to the above question is 'No', ask: **How come?***

How do the people in our community clean their teeth?

Let the members discuss.

What are good ways of cleaning our teeth?

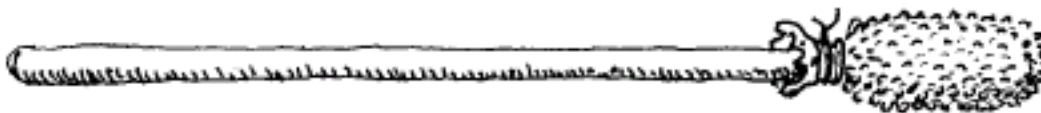
- Tooth brush and paste
- Twig made into a brush
- Twig with piece of cloth

Exercise: make a toothbrush from a twig. There are two ways of making a toothbrush yourself. Show the members if the group both ways.

- Give every member of the group a twig suitable to make a brush with and take one yourself. Show the group how to sharpen one end of the twig, tell them this part will be used to clean between the teeth. Continue by telling the group to chew on the other end of the twig, do this yourself also, and explain that this end of the twig can be used as a brush to clean the teeth.



- Take a twig, and tie a piece of rough towel around it (this can also be tied around the finger), and explain this is another device that can be used to clean teeth.



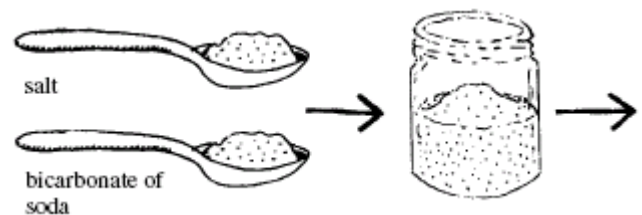
Do we need toothpaste to brush our teeth?

Let the members discuss. If required tell them it is good to use it but if we don't have it we can also use other things.

What other things can we use to brush our teeth?

- Powdered charcoal or salt.
- Tooth powder that we can make ourselves

Exercise: make toothpowder. (Show drawing)
Ask some volunteers from the group to help you make tooth powder. Mix a spoon of salt and a spoon of bicarbonate of soda (baking soda) in a small container. Make the brush you have just made a little bit wet and put it in the powder. Use this to brush your teeth.

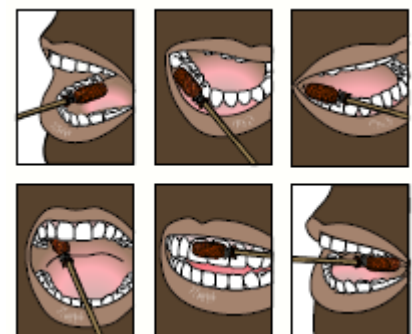


Show drawing

What can we learn from this picture about how we should brush our teeth?

We should:

- Scrub the inside, outside, and top of each tooth.



- Push the hairs of our brush between two teeth. Sweep the food away.
- Wash our mouth with water, to remove any loose bits of food.

What can happen to a person who does not take good care of his/her teeth?

- The person may get cavities. 'Cavities' are holes in teeth.

How do we recognize a cavity?

- A black spot on a tooth might be a cavity.
- If the tooth hurts some of the time, such as when you eat, drink, or breathe cold air, it probably has a cavity in it.

What should we do when we have a cavity?

- Visit a dental worker. He knows how to fill the cavity so you can keep that tooth. Do this before the pain gets worse.

What are the main dental problems in our community?

(Let the members discuss freely about any dental problems that exist in the community)

What are the causes of dental problems that exist in our community?

- Usually causes of dental problems are poor cleaning of the teeth and eating sweet food or drinking sweet drinks.

If there are any traditional beliefs about the causes of dental problems let the members discuss these and try to identify whether these beliefs are correct or not; if in doubt ask the community worker or, even better, an officially trained dental worker.

What can we do to prevent dental problems in our community?

(Let the members discuss. Write down any action points they decide on in the action list in the VAG meeting report.)

When does a child get its first teeth and what should we do about it?

- The baby teeth start to grow when the child is a baby. This can be painful, and the baby may cry more than usual. The only thing we can do is to try and comfort the baby. Once the teeth have grown the pain will go away.

How can we make sure our children and babies have healthy teeth?

- When they are small brush their teeth, as they get bigger teach them how to brush their teeth themselves
- Make sure they do not eat a lot of sweets or drink sweet drinks as these can cause cavities. Let them eat healthy food and drink healthy drinks, this is also better for their general health!

Why do children loose their teeth?

Children will loose their baby teeth, because the permanent teeth are growing underneath. The second and last set of teeth start to grow at school age. These teeth are permanent and should last a lifetime. To make them last we should take good care of them!

Do we have many children or babies with tooth problems in our community?

If the answer to the above question is yes, ask:

What should we do to avoid babies and children in our community to get bad teeth?

Let the participants discuss freely. Point at the lessons learned above and ask the participants to decide on action points that you take up in the action list.

Ask if there are any further questions.

Agree on the date, time, place and topic of the next meeting.

Close the meeting.