Open Wide: An Inside Look Into Oral Health Books For Children By An Interprofessional Review Team

**Objective**

Tooth decay affects children in the U.S. more than any other chronic infectious disease. To encourage healthy oral care habits in children, increase the oral health literacy of both child and caregiver, and to develop reading skills, a list of recommended oral health books for children was developed by an interprofessional team of reviewers for use by dentists and dental hygienists, pediatricians, nurses, librarians, and early childhood teachers.

**Review Process**

Currently available oral health books for children under the age of seven were reviewed using an evaluation tool developed by the authors and review team. Several review sessions were held in various locations. Once all books were evaluated by five or more reviewers, the evaluations were entered into a database and analyzed.

**Results**

The recommended list of children’s oral health books is in the process of being created based on general overall quality. Books will be organized into the following categories:

- Oral Health Care
- General Information about Teeth
- Going to the Dentist
- What Dental Professionals Do
- Healthy Foods for Healthy Teeth/Nutrition
- Books Available in Spanish

The list will be posted on the websites of the University of Maryland, Baltimore’s Health Sciences and Human Services Library and the Maryland Dental Action Coalition.

The list will be shared with:

- The Maryland Dental Action Coalition Network and its counterparts throughout the United States
- Health professional and educational organizations
- Publishers of specialty children’s books
- Literacy programs

**Conclusions**

It is hoped that the recommended children’s oral health book list will help guide purchasing decisions of health professionals, educators and librarians with the end goal of improving oral health literacy of both children and caregivers through reading. These lists will be especially helpful during National Children’s Dental Health Month in February when oral health outreach is emphasized in communities. A future goal is to partner with publishers of literacy programs to allow a select number of titles for purchase at a low cost so that all children in Maryland will have an oral health book in their personal library.

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