



LESSONS IN A LUNCH BOX: HEALTHY TEETH ESSENTIALS & FACTS ABOUT SNACKS[®]

Tooth decay remains the most common chronic disease of children ages five to seventeen. Dental caries is five times more common than asthma and seven times more common than hay fever. The social impact of oral disease in children is substantial. The 2000 Surgeon General's Report documents that more than 51 million school hours are lost each year to dental-related illness. Pain and suffering due to untreated diseases can lead to problems in eating, speaking and attending to learning.

Lessons in a Lunch Box: Healthy Teeth Essentials & Facts About Snacks[®] is an oral health literacy program designed to empower children and their families with the proper knowledge about routine dental care, oral health maintenance, good dietary choices and more using a "dentally designed" lunch box. The uniquely crafted lunch container illustrates flossing and brushing on the inside. My Plate, a USDA nutritional diagram is also displayed on the inside of the box. The lunch box provides children with their very own "Dental Care in a Carrot" case. The carrot case is designed to include a toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss and a rinse cup!

The outside of the lunch box is decorated on all five sides. The front, *Lessons in a Lunch Box: Healthy Teeth Essentials & Facts About Snacks[®]* label is proudly underscored featuring the logos of organized dentistry. The back highlights the logos of the generous sponsors. The 56 US dental schools are documented on the left side, flanked by the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) website. There is a name identification label on the right side. Finally, and quite possibly of the most far-reaching benefit, a reflective, metallic sticker, designed to resemble a smile, that reads, "*See Yourself Becoming A Dentist,*" located at the opening.

The *Lessons In A Lunch Box* program presenter (dentist, dental students and or hygienist) is encouraged to begin the 60-minute session with a song. "Good morning to you. We're all in all in our places with sun shiny faces and this is the way to start a good day." The dentist will then be introduced and will explain how all children can have beautiful smiles on their faces, that they must brush their teeth after meals, eat healthy foods and avoid harmful oral habits. Finally, the oral health professionals will demonstrate proper brushing and flossing before awarding every child the treasure-filled lunch box.

Teachers receive a five-day lesson plan to support the initiative. The students will be provided with lesson sheets and follow-up information about good nutritional habits, proper dental health and other important reminders including:

- Smoking is not a healthy thing to do.
- Brushing after every meal is important for you.
- Too many sweet candies can fill your teeth with icky, sticky goo.
- Never use anyone else's toothbrush. You will get their mouth germs too.
- Piercing your lip or tongue with jewelry can be a very dangerous thing to do.
- Grills and gold's and fronts can be difficult to view and they can destroy your teeth too.

The *Lessons In A Lunch Box* program serves to remind children and parents to include the delightfully, educational and very *orange* lunch box as a part of their child's daily routine. This now learned and self-empowered behavior becomes an enjoyed life-style that is regularly practiced by families.