



TOOTHENA THE TOOTH FAIRY'S TIPS FOR PARENTS

Caring for your child's teeth from a young age sets the stage for a lifetime of good oral health, says CoraMarie Clark, otherwise known as Toothena.

Here are her tips to ensure you and your kids have healthy, pearly whites:

- Set a good example by brushing and flossing your own teeth. Make toothbrushing a fun, bonding experience with your kids.
- Your child's teeth need to be brushed at least twice a day and flossed at least once a day, especially right before bedtime.
- Begin cleaning your child's teeth as soon as the first one appears. Start with a cloth or piece of gauze and move on to a toothbrush as your child gets older.
- Don't share toothbrushes. If you have periodontal disease, it can be passed on to the child.
- Begin flossing your child's teeth when he is three or four years old. Flossing is important because no matter how meticulously you brush, when the teeth are touching each other, toothbrush bristles can't clean effectively between them.
- Plan to floss your child's teeth until he is around eight years old. Children usually don't have the manual dexterity to floss on their own until that age.
- Your baby's first visit to the dentist should be for an assessment within six months of the eruption of the first tooth or by the time she reaches her first birthday. The goal is to have your child see your dentist before there are any problems with her teeth.
- Your child's first dental exam should happen by age two or three. This visit will allow the dentist to ensure your home care is working and to detect and prevent any problems right away.
- Help your child feel comfortable about a visit to the dentist. Read books, such as *The Berenstain Bears go to the Dentist* or *Emily's Magical Journey with Toothena the Tooth Fairy*. And consider bringing him along to your own checkup and cleaning, to familiarize him with how fun a visit to the dentist can be.

Courtesy, Kelly Bolin

Calgarian CoraMarie Clark, dressed as Toothena the Tooth Fairy, on a recent trip to Kenya.

SPREADING HEALTHY SMILES

Calgary's tooth fairy lands in Africa



MICHELLE MAGNAN

Toothena the Tooth Fairy may live in Calgary, but her wings are taking her all over the world.

Toward the end of October, CoraMarie Clark, the Calgary woman who reinvented herself as Toothena the Tooth Fairy for the children's book she wrote last year, visited Kenya to hand out 4,000 toothbrushes to kids in need.

It was the maiden voyage for the charity she founded in late 2007, called The Tooth Fairy Children's Foundation. The foundation received its official charitable status just weeks ago.

"My goal is to get toothbrushes into the hands of all children. And if they end up getting a cavity, I want somebody there to help them have it taken care of," says Clark, over a cup of coffee at Caffe Beano.

"In developing countries, 90 per cent of decay goes untreated. (Learning that) just ripped my heart out and I thought, 'I need to do something to try to make a difference.'"

Dressed in everyday clothes, Clark looks every bit the professional she is.

A former dental hygienist, the 52-year-old has an MBA from the

SPOTLIGHT

Catch Toothena the Tooth Fairy live when she lands at a book store near you. Head to an upcoming book reading to see Toothena — otherwise known as Calgarian CoraMarie Clark — and have her sign your copy of her kids' book, *Emily's Magical Journey with Toothena the Tooth Fairy*. Here are the dates and locations:

- Signal Hills Indigo (5570 Signal Hill Centre S.W.) on Jan. 18 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Spectrum Chapters (500, 2555 32nd St. N.E.) on Jan. 18 from 2 to 4 p.m.
- Macleod Trail Chapters (9631 Macleod Tr.) on Jan. 24 from 2 to 4 p.m.

University of Calgary and is a dental consultant for practices across North America.

But dressed in her light-pink gown, wand and tiara, Clark glows as Toothena, the real-life version of the animated heroine in her self-published children's book, *Emily's Magical Journey with Toothena the Tooth Fairy* (2007, \$22.95).

Clark donned her costume every time she spoke at a school or orphanage in Kenya and, months after her trip, still gets teary speaking about the kids she met along the way.

Some would feel the layers of her dress; others would be bold and stroke her arm or pat her hair.

The costume certainly got their attention, which she then put to good use. Whenever she handed out toothbrushes, she also taught kids how to use them.

Many times, the kids on the

receiving end had never owned their own toothbrush and were used to sharing.

"At an orphanage for boys, there was a peanut butter jar with the oldest, most awful-looking toothbrushes I've ever seen. It made my stomach turn," she says.

"It was just amazing to give them (each) a new toothbrush."

Since returning from her near month-long trip, Clark has been spending much of her time on the foundation.

She will always be Toothena, working to get kids in Calgary and everywhere excited about their teeth so they feel motivated to take good care of them, but she says her heart is in building the foundation and its reach.

She is exploring a partnership with a close family friend, Eric Rajah, founder of Lacombe-based A Better World Canada, that would see dental services offered at his existing medical facilities around the world.

And she's also exploring the idea of having Canadian dentists sign up to manage clinics across the globe.

She hopes that others get involved in her quest to provide kids with access to proper dental care — not only for the kids' sake, but for their own, too.

"Whatever we do will make a difference for somebody. You know, looking at those smiling little faces getting those toothbrushes, I made a difference to them," she says.

"But wow, what a gift — a tremendous gift — they gave me just with their smiles."

For more information, visit thetoothfairyspeaks.com.