

# Sharing the oral health message

compiled by Isabel Carter

The Oral Health Programme in Nepal has produced posters and flashcards in the Nepali language to share oral health messages with teachers, parents and children. These are the main messages:



**1** Ram and his family have clean, healthy teeth and gums. This is because they eat nutritious foods and brush their teeth regularly.



**2** They eat good food with plenty of milk, fruit and vegetables.



**3** When their children were born they were breast fed. Breast milk is nutritious and provides immunity to fight disease. It also contains less sugar, which is very important for the health of growing teeth.



**4** They brush their teeth twice a day, using a toothbrush or a twig (usually of neem). They use a fluoride toothpaste which helps strengthen teeth. When they have no toothpaste they use salt mixed with cooking oil.



**10** Remember that just as trees need strong roots and earth to support them, teeth also need strong foundations of bones and gums to support them. Eat healthy foods and keep your teeth and gums clean so that your teeth will stay strong and firm into your old age.

**8** Sita has an ulcer on the side of her tongue which has been there for over two months. This is the early sign of cancer and occurs in both men and women. If found and treated early enough it can usually be cured.



**5** Shyam likes to eat unhealthy foods. He likes sweets, biscuits, cakes, sugar, ice cream and sodas. These are not good for our health and are usually a lot more expensive than healthy food. His face is swollen on one side because he has a painful infection (abscess) in one of his teeth.



**9** Mouth cancer is usually caused by regularly using *pan* (betel), smoking cigarettes and chewing tobacco – especially when combined with drinking alcohol. Try gradually to reduce your use of these and rinse your mouth with plenty of fresh water afterwards.



**7** How do sweet foods harm our teeth? Every morning we can all feel a 'furry film' on our teeth. This is made of germs or bacteria and is called 'plaque'. We brush our teeth to remove this plaque. (Check for plaque on your own teeth by using your clean fingernail as a scraper around the base of your teeth). These bacteria eat sweet foods and produce acid which can make holes in the teeth. The more sweet foods we eat, the greater the chance of holes developing in our teeth. If these grow large, they reach the tooth nerve which starts to ache and can cause swelling of our mouth and face.



**6** When we see the inside of Shyam's mouth we can see many holes in his teeth which give him a lot of pain when he drinks hot or cold liquids. He rarely brushes his teeth because his gums bleed.