

Lolita and
Maria Have
Good, Clean
Teeth



Published by:
The Guyana Book Foundation
216 Almond Street
Queenstown, Guyana
South America

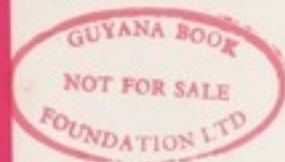
With support from:
The Canadian Organization for
Development through Education (CODE)
and
The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

In association with:
U.S. Peace Corps Guyana
and
Iwokrama International Centre
for Rain Forest Conservation and Development

Text and illustrations by Liz Schuster
Layout and design by Samantha James

Printing by Pavnik Press
27 'D' lama Avenue, Bel Air Park
Georgetown, Guyana

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INTRODUCTION

Say hello to Lolita and Maria! They and their friend Ricky have lots to say to you.

The children in these books pose the essential questions and their teacher, health worker, and peers discuss the issues, work through the problems and try to answer the questions. The theme here is learning by doing—doing the right things to keep clean, eat well, have clean teeth, prevent malaria, avoid AIDS, alcoholism, and diarrhoea.

This series of booklets is first of all, a gift to the children, youth and community of Annai in the North Rupununi District of Guyana from Liz Schuster, a Peace Corps Volunteer and the creator of the booklets. Her work was related to primary health care and outreach and she was formally attached to the Ministry of Health's local health centre in Annai from 1999-2001.

Iwokrama is particularly pleased to have been able to help bring these books to life by supporting Liz and her Peace Corps colleague Linda Bueno in their community development and outreach work in Fair View village. Samantha James, Information Specialist of Iwokrama, assisted by Ramona Zephyr, meticulously rendered the stories into digital format and helped enhance the design, colour and general layout of the text. The Guyana Book Foundation has played a key role, too, by covering the costs of printing and distribution to hinterland schools throughout Guyana. Leila Jagdeo, the manager, has been an anchor of the project in this regard.

The books can be used in a variety of creative ways to help spread the health messages. The youths of Annai, for example, could adapt the stories to be aired on their community based radio station, Radio Paiwomak. Villagers anywhere could make quizzes and skits to reinforce the themes for community and classroom use. The booklets, in and of themselves are delightful, authentic and useful for young and old alike. We urge children and teachers to keep them off the shelves and firmly placed in the hands of pupils. Books are not ornaments, and these particular books are to be read and re-read and used and re-used and put into practice by all of us who get the chance to read and hear what Lolita and Maria have to say.

Vanda Radzik
Community Development Fellow, Iwokrama

The Medex and the Community Health Worker visited the school today. They talked to the children about teeth. "Why do we need our teeth?" the CHW asked.



"So we can eat, chew, and bite our food," some children said.



Maria said, "So we can talk."

"Right," said the CHW.

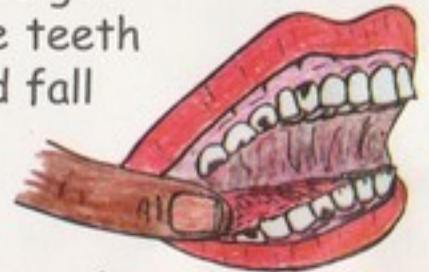
"And we also need good teeth so that we have nice breath, so we look good, and so our bodies stay healthy. Teeth are important."

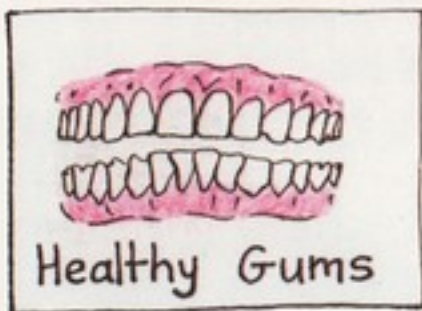


Then they looked into each child's mouth. "What are you looking for?" Lolita asked.

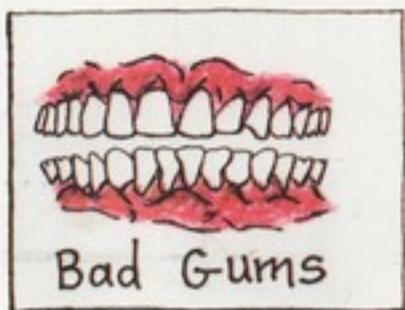


"We are looking for black spots, because they might be caries, or holes in the teeth. If the holes get bigger, the teeth will rot and fall out," Medex said.





"We are also looking at the gums. If you do not have healthy gums, you will not have good teeth. Healthy gums look nice and pink. They fold around each tooth like a pocket.



Red gums that bleed are bad, infected gums," the CHW said.



They told the children that good foods like fruits and greens are good for teeth. But the sugar in sweets and sweet drinks is bad for teeth.



They also said to brush teeth and gums EVERY day. "Food hides on the tops, sides, and spaces between teeth," Medex said.



This made Lolita feel sad. She had lost her toothbrush and had no money to buy a new one.

The CHW showed Lolita how to take a green, soft branch and to chew on one end, making it stringy like a brush. With a point on the other end, she could clean in between her teeth, too.



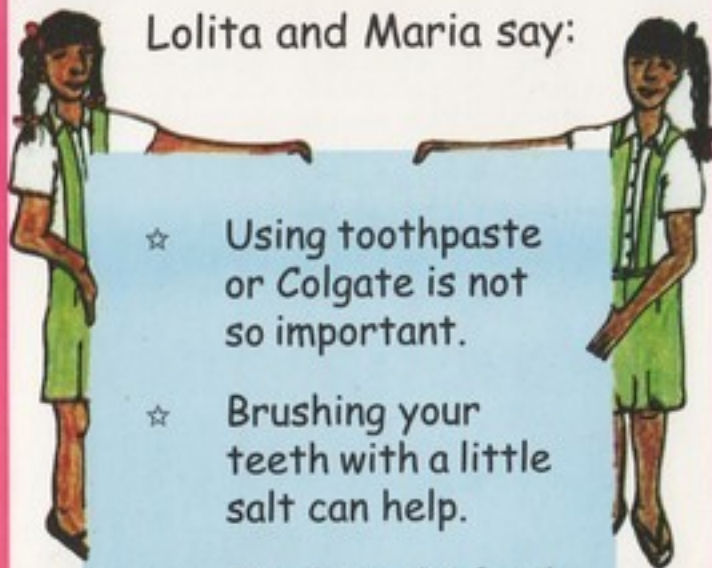
Lolita made her very own toothbrush! With good clean water, she could keep her teeth clean.



The girls were happy that they had no caries. They made a promise to always brush their teeth and to eat healthy foods.



Lolita and Maria say:



- ☆ Using toothpaste or Colgate is not so important.
- ☆ Brushing your teeth with a little salt can help.
- ☆ Brushing the food away is what really matters!
- ☆ Try making your own dental health poster.

Here is a dental health song.

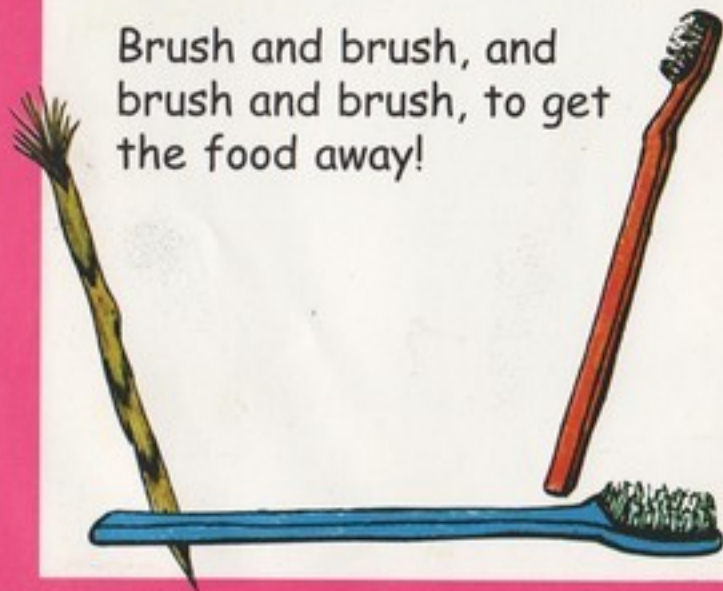
Sing it to the tune of "Row, Row,
Row Your Boat".



Brush, brush, brush your
teeth!

Brush them twice a day.

Brush and brush, and
brush and brush, to get
the food away!



Acknowledgements

The author would like to acknowledge that the ideas for the text and drawings of this story were drawn from everyday experiences of living and working in Annai Village, as well as from the following sources:

Werner, D., Thuman, C., Maxwell, J., (1992) *Where There Is No Doctor*. Hesperian Foundation, California.

Dickson Murray., (1983) *Where There Is No Dentist*. Hesperian Foundation, California.

This story is the result of an effort to compile information available in Guyana and to build upon it by placing it in a more localized Amerindian context. It is hoped that the simple language and drawings will attract the interest of children and those beginning to read.

Text and drawings by Liz Schuster, Peace Corps Volunteer (1999-2001), Annai Village, North Rupununi, Guyana.

Layout and design by Samantha James, Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation and Development.

Special thanks to Vanda Radzik, Janette Forte, Juliet Solomon, René Van Dongen, Terrence Simmons, Leila Jagdeo and Eugene Xavier for their support in the creation and production of this story.

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