

BRUSHING IS FUN!

Guidelines for Toothbrushing in North Carolina Child Care Programs: Infant and Toddler Classrooms (tooth eruption to 3rd birthday)



Steps for Individual Toothbrushing in Infant and Toddler Classrooms

Prepare to Brush

1. Clean and disinfect the designated sink before toothbrushing begins.
2. Adult washes hands and uses powder- and latex-free disposable gloves to prepare supplies.
3. Lay out one paper towel for each child having teeth brushed.
4. Using a single tube of fluoride toothpaste, place a small smear (size of a grain of rice) for each child on an intermediate surface, such as wax paper, a paper towel, or paper plate.
 - For this age group, placing the toothpaste on the rim of a small disposable cup is not necessary, as the child does not need to spit or rinse.
5. With gloved hands, an adult removes the child's toothbrush from the rack and scoops up a smear of fluoride toothpaste on the bristles from the intermediate surface.



Individual Brushing

6. Adult positions the child. Positions explained in Helpful Hints.
7. With the child positioned, adult gently brushes in small circles, back and forth, up and down, inside, outside, and top of all teeth.
 - When using a smear of toothpaste, spitting is not necessary, and rinsing is not recommended. The small amount of fluoride toothpaste left in the mouth helps strengthen the teeth and prevents cavities, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.*



Clean Up

8. After brushing, an adult places the unrinsed brush on the paper towel laid out for this purpose in step 3 above.
9. If the child took a turn brushing her/his own teeth, (s)he should wash her/his hands.
10. Adult removes gloves, washes hands, and re-gloves before preparing the next child's toothbrush.
11. Repeat steps 5 through 10 until all children's teeth are brushed.
12. After all children's teeth are brushed, clean and disinfect sink before rinsing toothbrushes and returning them to rack.
13. Adult washes hands and puts on gloves.
14. Using the paper towel under each toothbrush, adult picks it up by the handle, rinses the bristles under running water, and places the brush and paper towel on a flat surface to dry.
15. Repeat this process with each of the toothbrushes, using the paper towel as a barrier and being careful not to touch the toothbrushes with the gloves.
16. After rinsing all brushes, clean and disinfect sink, remove gloves and wash hands.
17. When the brush handles are dry, an adult wearing gloves picks up each child's rinsed brush using the dried paper towel it is placed on and returns each brush one-at-a-time to the storage rack slot with the child's name or number on it.
18. Adult cleans and sanitizes surfaces where brushes dried, removes gloves, and washes hands.



Toothbrush and Storage Rack Care

Toothbrushes

1. Adult places each toothbrush upright in a commercial storage rack, not touching other brushes.
2. Use children's names or assigned numbers to identify brushes, with labels placed on the rack and on each brush.
3. Allow brushes to air dry. Individual covers are not recommended.
4. Store toothbrushes in a protected area, such as a cabinet.
5. Do not store in the bathroom, toileting, or diapering areas.
6. Clean, sanitize, and air-dry storage racks weekly, or sooner if visibly soiled.

Sanitizing Toothbrush Racks

1. Clean, sanitize, and air-dry toothbrush rack in child care center kitchen sink.
2. Wash hands and wear gloves.
3. Using a separate paper towel for each brush, remove toothbrushes from the rack and place each brush on top of the paper towel. Make sure the toothbrushes do not touch each other.
4. Clean, sanitize, and air-dry the rack.
5. When the rack is dry, pick up each toothbrush one at a time with the paper towel used to remove it from the rack, and place it back in the rack. Make sure to match the child's name/number on the brush to the slot on the rack.
6. Remove gloves and wash hands.
 - When removing and replacing toothbrushes in the rack, wearing gloves and using a separate paper towel/napkin for handling each brush prevents spreading germs from one brush to another, and to the adult handling the brushes.

Helpful Hints

- ✓ Positioning INFANT or TODDLER for brushing:
 - Sit in a chair and place the child sideways in your lap, leaning the head back cradled in your arm. Have the child open wide like a lion (or favorite animal) and count the lion's teeth out loud as you brush them.
 - Sit in a chair and have the toddler stand while you brush his/her teeth.
 - Remember that crying during toothbrushing is 'noisy cooperation.' When the mouth is open, you can see the teeth. Just do your best and keep trying! Children's behavior may improve over time as brushing becomes part of the daily routine and as they enter new developmental stages.
- ✓ Sing a child's favorite song while brushing his/her teeth.
- ✓ Praise children for opening wide like a lion or a favorite animal.
- ✓ Use a toothbrushing chart where each child may place a sticker after brushing daily. The chart also serves as a classroom toothbrushing monitoring system.
- ✓ Making toothbrushing fun will create a positive experience for children and you.

General Toothbrushing Information

- ✓ Toothbrushing begins when an infant's first tooth starts to appear through the gums.
- ✓ Up to a child's 3rd birthday, an adult brushes each individual child's teeth. After the 3rd birthday, children participate in group brushing in the classroom. Adults assist with this activity by supervising, encouraging, and timing toothbrushing.
- ✓ Establish a daily routine, brushing once during the child care day when it works best for the classroom schedule.
- ✓ If group brushing occurs immediately after a meal or snack, sanitizing tables and children's handwashing is postponed until after toothbrushing.
- ✓ In a child care setting, children do not need to brush at the sink. Sinks are used for handwashing and for rinsing toothbrushes *after* brushing.
- ✓ Rinsing the mouth with water after brushing is not recommended or necessary.
- ✓ Centers located in a school that use the cafeteria as their approved kitchen must send the toothbrush rack to the cafeteria to be cleaned, sanitized, and air dried.

About Fluoride Toothpaste

- ✓ The most important part of toothbrushing is for the fluoride toothpaste to reach all the child's teeth. This is the best way to prevent cavities!
- ✓ Use children's fluoride toothpaste with the American Dental Association Seal of Acceptance.
- ✓ Use the proper amount of fluoride toothpaste, depending on the age of the child:
 - A smear the size of a grain of rice for children, from tooth eruption to 3 years.
 - A pea-sized amount for children ages 3 to 6 years.
- ✓ Dispense fluoride toothpaste on an intermediate surface.
- ✓ Store fluoride toothpaste out of the reach of children.

About Toothbrushes

- ✓ Use child-size toothbrushes with soft bristles.
- ✓ Label each toothbrush with child's name or assigned number.
- ✓ Label each toothbrush rack slot with each child's name or assigned number for toothbrush storage.
- ✓ Toothbrushes are stored with bristles upright to air dry, and not touching other brushes. Individual covers are not recommended.
- ✓ Replace toothbrushes every six months; more often if they are worn, damaged, or contaminated by another toothbrush or child.
- ✓ Do not allow children to play with or share toothbrushes.

*Clark, MB, Slayton, RL and Section on Oral Health (2014). Fluoride Use in Caries Prevention in the Primary Care Setting. *Pediatrics*,134(3), pp.626-633.
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