

BRUSHING IS FUN!

Guidelines for Toothbrushing in the MSCS Early Childhood Program: Head Start & Pre-K Classrooms (3 to 5 year-old children)



Steps for Classroom Circle Toothbrushing

Prepare to Brush

- Clean and sanitize tables and have children wash their hands.
- Adult washes hands and wears powder and/or latex-free disposable gloves to prepare and distribute supplies.
- Supplies include: disposable toothbrushes w/fluoride, cups, napkins/separate paper towels, and trash cans/trash bag.
- Supplies can be prepared before toothbrushes are distributed to minimize children waiting time.
- All children should be provided with their own set of supplies to prevent cross contamination.
 - Adult should also use the supplies to demonstrate and promote learning while engaging the children in proper oral hygiene.
 - If brushing follows a meal or snack, children do not need to wash hands if they washed prior to eating.
 - If brushing is scheduled with a meal or snack, tables will not need cleaning and sanitizing before brushing supplies are distributed on the tables.



Group Brushing

- When all children are seated with their supplies, an adult instructs and/or assist the children to open their disposable toothbrush w/fluoride.
 - The American Dental Association recommends brushing for two (2) minutes. Use a timer.
- The adult instructs the students to brush gently back and forth, up and down, inside, outside, and top of all teeth.
 - If the adult models by brushing her/his own teeth, or assists a student, the adult must remove gloves, wash hands, and re-glove.



- At the end of two (2) minutes, adult instructs students to spit into their cups and wipe their mouths with the paper towel or napkin. Children should place the paper towel/napkin and toothbrush inside the cup.
 - Rinsing the mouth with water is not recommended or necessary. The small amount of fluoride toothpaste left in the mouth after spitting helps strengthen the teeth and prevents cavities, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.*

During toothbrushing:

- ***Playing music or singing to the children makes brushing fun!***
- ***Children may spit into their cups to avoid drooling onto the table or themselves.***

Clean Up

- To prevent cross contamination, students should discard the stuffed cup into the trash can or trash bag with staff assistance.
- One table at a time, the children get up to throw their cups away, or staff will collect the trash from each table in an attempt to minimize the spread of germs
- Each child washes his/her hands immediately after brushing.
- Adult cleans and sanitizes tables and surfaces, removes gloves and washes hands.



HELPFUL HINTS FOR GROUP TOOTHBRUSHING

- ✓ Keep group toothbrushing activity calm and positive by singing or playing toothbrushing songs softly as the class prepares.
- ✓ Group brushing right after a meal or snack avoids an extra transition.
- ✓ Use child-friendly words to describe areas of the mouth during brushing such as 'chewing teeth' for back teeth and 'cutting teeth' for front teeth. Using 'upstairs' for top teeth and 'downstairs' for bottom teeth add an element of fun.
- ✓ Praising children with statements such as 'You're doing a great job brushing all of your teeth!' and 'Fluoride toothpaste makes our teeth strong!' lets them know you support their efforts.
- ✓ If more than one adult is present, have each supervise a smaller group of children.
- ✓ Use a toothbrushing chart where each child can place a sticker after brushing. The chart also serves as a class toothbrushing monitoring system.
- ✓ Making toothbrushing fun will create a positive experience for children and adults.

*Clark, MB ,Slayton, RL and Section on Oral Health (2014). Fluoride Use in Cariew Prevention in the Primary Care Setting. Pediatrics, 134(3), pp.626-633.
Retrieved from <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/134/626>