

(Insert your setting
logo/name here)

In partnership with



Public Health
England

Smiles 4Children

Toothbrushing for two, three and four-year-olds





Context

Tooth decay and gum disease are two of the most common, and entirely preventable, dental problems for children.

Recently released statistics have identified that one in eight three-year-olds and one in four five-year-olds suffer from tooth decay, while more than 25,000 children aged five to nine have been admitted to hospital due to tooth decay. In fact, tooth decay is the most common reasons for children under five to undergo general anaesthetic.

These frightening statistics can be easily combatted by something as easy as toothbrushing. Toothbrushing with a fluoride toothpaste can prevent tooth decay in children in the early years foundation stage and therefore reduce the number of children experiencing toothaches and extractions – two extremely painful situations that also impact on speech and long-term dental health.

Case Study

Scotland, having had a similar problem, has addressed this issue through its Childsmile programme. The results have been outstanding.

“Daily toothbrushing in nurseries has had a significant impact on improving the oral health of children under five in Scotland.” - Dr Margie Taylor, Chief Dental Officer for Scotland

Learning from Scotland, Wales and locally commissioned programmes across England (e.g. Wigan, Blackpool and Stockton), 4Children aims to implement a toothbrushing programme following these successful models. The Smiles 4Children programme will aim to test the feasibility of a toothbrushing programme for 2 and 3 year old children in the EYFS.



How the Programme Works

Smiles 4Children will aim to introduce toothbrushing into the everyday activities of children within their setting to ensure it becomes a positive and routine experience.

Each child will brush their teeth at least once a day within the setting, depending on the length of time they are attending. The latest research tells us that you cannot brush your teeth too often. It is hoped that the child will also have brushed their teeth with a fluoride toothpaste before bed and at least one other occasion at home.

Children are to be supervised at all times when brushing to supervise the amount of toothpaste used and preventing eating or licking toothpaste, and they should be instructed on how to brush correctly in order to create effective brushing habits. Remember, this programme should be a fun activity that excites children and teaches them about proper oral health care.

Toothbrushes will be kept in an effective storage system that facilitates air drying and prevents cross contamination. We suggest naming each individual child's toothbrush and keeping it in a paper cup with the child's name on it. When toothbrushing time begins, toothbrushes will be removed and handed to each child.

We suggest that brushing take place in a circle time format at a time of day that is most suitable for each group. Toothbrushing will take place in groups at a dry area – no water needed! Play one of the toothbrushing songs listed on page 6 to make the activity fun.

When a toothpaste tube is shared, toothpaste should be dispensed directly onto a clean surface such as a paper towel. There must be sufficient space between the quantities of dispensed toothpaste to allow for collection without cross contamination. For 0-3 year olds only a smear should be dispensed and 3-6 years a pea sized amount.

Children are discouraged from swallowing toothpaste during and after brushing. Toothpaste should be spat out, but not rinsed. Not rinsing the mouth after brushing ensures that the fluoride from the toothpaste stays on the teeth, ensuring more protection from cavities.

After toothbrushing, brushes are rinsed thoroughly and replaced in the storage system to dry.



Good Practice

Toothpaste

The settings will source the toothpaste for this programme

Under three years of age

A smear of toothpaste containing at least 1350-1500 parts per million (ppm) fluoride should be used for children under three years. Do not reapply if paste is swallowed.

Over three years of age

A pea sized amount of toothpaste containing 1350-1500 parts per million (ppm) fluoride should be used for children aged over three years. Do not reapply if paste is swallowed.

Please see page 11 for recommended toothpastes. As discussed you may want to use just one toothpaste for your two, three and four-year olds. Smiles 4Children have to be cautious of recommending any particular brand to parents or practitioners, but please check to ensure the correct amount of fluoride in the toothpaste and that it contains no animal products.

Toothbrushes

Toothbrushes should have a small head size with medium textured bristles. Toothbrushes must be individually identifiable for each child and replaced once every three months, or sooner if required.

How to dry brush

Place the head of the toothbrush against the teeth, tilting the bristle tips to a 45 degree angle against the gum line. Move the brush in small circular movements, several times, on all the surfaces of every tooth.

Brush the outer surfaces of each tooth, upper and lower, keeping the bristles angled against the gum line.

To clean the inside surfaces of the front teeth, tilt the brush vertically and make several small circular strokes with the front part of the brush.

Spit out after brushing onto a paper towel but do not rinse. This allows the fluoride to stay on the teeth longer.



Infection Control

Toothbrush storage

Toothbrushes are a potential source of infection. Good practice would encourage the use of a storage system that:

- stores toothbrushes in either an appropriate storage system or individual holders, e.g. paper cups
- allows children to be able to identify their own toothbrush
- enables brushes to stand upright
- allows sufficient distance between toothbrushes to avoid cross contamination
- allows for natural air drying of brushes
- are stored at adult height

Cleaning procedures

Good cleaning practice should be an integral part of childcare, especially when it comes to hygiene.

- Ensure storage systems and storage areas are cleaned, rinsed and dried at least once a week using warm water and general purpose neutral detergent
- Wearing household gloves to clean storage systems and sinks and ensure that all cuts, abrasions and breaks in the skin are covered with a waterproof dressing before cleaning is carried out
- Ensure that toothbrushes do not touch when being removed or put back in storage systems
- Do not place storage systems adjacent to the sink area or next to the children whilst toothbrushing is taking place. Replace storage systems if there are any cracks, scratches or rough surfaces
- Any toothbrushes dropped on the floor should be cleaned thoroughly
- Never soak toothbrushes

Children with a medical diagnosis of infection or ulcerations in mouth should not participate in supervised toothbrushing until problem has resolved. These children should continue to brush their teeth at home.



Sample toothbrushing session: A step-by-step guide

1. Children are brought together in a circle group for “toothbrushing time” and remain supervised at all times. Children may be seated or standing whilst brushing their teeth
2. The practitioner collects the toothbrushes from the storage system and distributes them to each child
3. Toothpaste is dispensed by the practitioner by placing the appropriate amount directly onto a paper towel. Each dispensed amount should be placed apart from each other to allow collection onto a brush head without contamination from other brushes or pastes
4. Each child or a practitioner can collect the paste from the paper towel using their brush head
5. Children brush for two minutes whilst practitioner ensure correct brushing techniques
6. After toothbrushing is complete, children spit excess toothpaste into a disposable paper towel
7. Practitioners and/or children dispose of the tissues immediately after use in a refuse bag or bin
8. Toothbrushes are either:
 - returned to the rack by the child and taken to an identified sink area by the practitioner who is responsible for rinsing each toothbrush individually under running water
 - rinsed at a designated sink area where each child is responsible for rinsing their own toothbrush under cold running water
9. Toothbrushes are returned to the storage system by the practitioner or child and allowed to air dry
10. Practitioner rinse sinks after toothbrushing is complete



Toothbrushing songs

Brushing teeth

(Tune – ‘Twinkle twinkle little star’)

Here’s my toothpaste
Here’s my brush
I won’t hurry, I won’t rush
Working hard to keep teeth clean
Front and back and in between
When I brush for quite a while
I will have a happy smile

Wiggle-Jiggle tooth

(Tune – ‘Old Macdonald’)

In my mouth, I have some
teeth
E i e i o
And in my mouth I put my
brush
E i e i o
With a wiggle-jiggle here
and a wiggle-jiggle there
Here a wiggle, there a jiggle
Everywhere a wiggle-jiggle
In my mouth I’ll keep my teeth
E i e i o

Are your teeth clean and white

(Tune – ‘Do your ears hang low’)

Are your teeth clean and white?
Do you brush them left and right?
Do you brush them in the morning?
Do you brush them every night?
Do you brush them up and down?
Do you brush them round and
round?

Brush, brush, brush your teeth

(Tune ‘Row, row, row your boat’)

Brush, brush, brush your teeth
Brush them every day
We put toothpaste on our brush
To help stop tooth decay
Clean, clean, clean your teeth
Clean them every day
Your teeth will sparkle for years to
come
In the most beautiful way
Brush, brush, brush your teeth
Brush them every day
Happy, healthy teeth you’ll have
If it’s done this way



Frequently asked questions

Q) How do we clean the toothbrushes?

A) Rinse brushes under cold water, ensuring all toothpaste is removed. At no time should brushes be stored or cleaned together. Do not put them in a sink together.

Q) Is rinsing the toothbrushes enough?

A) Yes. Each brush is only used by that one child so there will be no cross infection issues.

Q) What do I do if toothpaste hardens on the bristles?

A) Rinse the brush under warm water to loosen toothpaste, then rinse in cold water.

Q) Should brushes be drained or wiped before going back in storage?

A) Toothbrushes should simply be returned to the storage unit for air drying.

Q) What do I do if a child has bleeding gums?

A) Follow the same policy that you would use to discard any bloody tissues following nose bleeds and inform the parent so they may contact their dentist for review.

Q) How can I prevent the names rubbing off brushes?

A) We recommend the names be written on brushes with a permanent pen.

Remind parents or carers that they can find details of NHS dentists in their areas through their local NHS England area team or online at <http://www.nhs.uk/service-search>



Letter to parents/guardians and Permission form

(insert setting address)

Dear Parent/ Guardian,

We are hoping to involve your child in toothbrushing once a day with fluoride toothpaste at the nursery. We will be using age appropriate toothpaste that has the right amount of fluoride for your child's age group. If you would prefer your child to use another toothpaste, you will have to provide it to the setting.

In other parts of the United Kingdom this approach to children brushing their teeth during nursery session has shown to improve their oral dental health significantly. We will be teaching the children how to brush their teeth independently. Feedback from nurseries in Scotland who have been doing this for some time tells us that children become enthusiastic about brushing their teeth at home too, and we sincerely hope that will also be the case with your child.

You can withdraw your child at any time from the programme but please inform the nursery staff.

Please sign below to give your permission, and return the slip as soon as possible to the setting.

Yours faithfully,

(Insert setting manager's name)

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I give/do not give my permission for (Child's name) to take part in tooth brushing at nursery.

Does your child have special fluoride drops/tablets/toothpaste from your dentist?

Please write here and speak with the nursery staff.

.....

Signed.....parent/guardian

Date.....



Tips for brushing with your child

- Brush teeth and gums thoroughly with a fluoride toothpaste last thing at night and at least one other time during the day
- Children under three years should have no more than a smear of toothpaste with 1350-1500ppm of fluoride content
- Children over three years of age should use no more than a pea-sized amount of toothpaste with 1350 – 1500ppm of fluoride content
- Put toothpaste onto a dry brush
- Brush for two minutes
- Brush both top and bottom teeth, outside and inside, back and front
- Your child should spit out excess toothpaste, but not rinse after brushing
- Children need help with brushing until they are at least seven-years-old

Caring for teeth

- Sugary foods and drinks can damage teeth. Keep them to a minimum and try to have them at mealtimes only
- Try not to snack between meals, and stick to drinking water or milk
- Dental check-ups are important, so be sure to take your child for regular dentist visits. To find a dentist, visit <http://www.nhs.uk/service-search>

Important note

If your child is receiving treatment from your dentist which includes special fluoride drops/tablets or toothpaste, please advise nursery staff so that the correct toothpaste can be used.



Age	What starts to happen	Usual number of teeth by this age	What you should do
Around 6 months	Front teeth begin to appear	0–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Register and attend a dental practice• Seek advice on teething, toothbrushing and healthy foods and drinks
Around 1 year	Top and bottom front teeth may be obvious	4–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make an appointment at the dental practice• Seek advice on toothbrushing (e.g. when and how) and healthy foods and drinks
Around 18 months	Some back teeth will be in – others will start to come through	8 - 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make an appointment for a dental check• Seek advice on toothbrushing (including back teeth) and healthy foods and drinks
Around 2 years	The very back teeth will be starting to come in	12–16	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make an appointment at the dental practice• Ask for the first application of fluoride varnish• Seek advice on toothbrushing and healthy foods and drinks
Around 2 ½ years	Most of the baby teeth will be through	16–20	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make an appointment at the dental practice• Ask for the next application of fluoride varnish• Seek advice on toothbrushing and healthy foods and drinks
Around 3 years	All baby teeth should be through	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make an appointment at the dental practice• Ask for next application of fluoride varnish• Seek advice on toothbrushing and check that you are doing all you can to keep your child's teeth healthy• Enrol your child for toothbrushing and fluoride varnish programmes (if offered) in the nursery



Toothpastes containing exactly 1,000ppm Fluoride		Toothpastes containing 1,000ppm—1,500ppm Fluoride	
ASDA	Protect 0-3 Milk Teeth	Arm and Hammer	Original Coolmint
Aquafresh	Milk Teeth 0-2 years	Biotene	Fluoride
Beverley Hills Formula	Dentist's choice	Boots	Smile Fresh Stripe, Total care, Weekly clean, Smile Kids 6+
Boots	Essentials, Smile Kids 2-6	Colgate	Fresh Minty Gel, Cool Stripe, Max Beads Blue, Max Fresh Blue
Colgate	Kids 0-3	Co-operative	Totalcare, Sensitive and totalcare
Dr Fresh	Thomas the Tank Engine	Kingfisher	Mint with Fluoride, Fennel with Fluoride
Kokomo	Hello Kitty	Kokomo	Peppa Pig
Sainsbury's own	Kids Toothpaste 0-3	Macleans	Fresh Mint, Total Health
Tom's of Maine	Fennel and Spearmint	Mentadent	Mentadent SR
Wilkinsons	Wilko Everyday value	Oral	Stages – Bubble gum, 1-2-3, Complete Extra Fresh, Pro Expert All Around Protection, Clean
		Sainsbury's own	Basics, Extracare Fresh, Kids Toothpaste 3-6
		Sensodyne	Complete Protection, Extra Fresh Daily Care, Extra Fresh Mint, Pronamel Daily Toothpaste, Daily Fluoride, Children 6 – 12 years. Extra Freshness, Total Care
		Superdrug	Procare
		Tesco's own	Everyday Value, Kids Strawberry, Freshmint, Steps Toothpaste 0-2, Steps Toothpaste 3-, 6+, All day protection complete, Freshmint
		Tom's of Maine	Fennel and Spearmint
		Wilkinsons	Freshmint Fresh
		Wisdom	Xtra clean, Zohar kosher toothpaste



Resources

- Please refer to the Public Health England oral health toolkit for all oral health prevention practice: [*Delivering Better Oral Health, 3rd Edition, 2014, Department of Health*](#)
- Recommended toothpaste list from Public Health England publication [*Delivering Better Oral Health: An Evidence-Based Toolkit for Prevention \(3rd Edition\)*](#)
- <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/childrens-meal-ideas.aspx>
- <https://www.dentalhealth.org/tell-me-about/topic/caring-for-teeth/childrens-teeth>
- <http://www.child-smile.org.uk/>
- <http://www.designedtosmile.co.uk/whatisd2s.html>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/change4life-beta/campaigns/sugar-smart/home>
- <https://www.bda.org/sugar>

