

Toothbrushing Guidance and Best Practices:

The following are some best practice resources for toothbrushing, as well as some things that we want to make sure we are doing correctly around toothbrushing. This is an important activity that is done daily in all classrooms and that is required by the Performance Standards. The Head Start ECLKC website has some really helpful resources I wanted to share with you about best practices for this daily activity.

[CLICK HERE](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/steps-toothbrushing-table-growing-healthy-smiles-early-care-education-programs) (https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/steps-toothbrushing-table-growing-healthy-smiles-early-care-education-programs) for a video on table brushing. This is the recommended format of toothbrushing, as it is doable for any center vs. sink brushing which can cause bottle necks and take a long time.

Additionally, below is a quick reference guide on circle or table brushing. This brochure was created by a specific Head Start, but is applicable to all and is published on the ECLKC website as a best practice for programs.

A few notes on toothbrushing practices:

- When doing a circle or table toothbrushing activity it is important to provide as much opportunity for the children to keep their toothbrushes from touching the floor- so it is recommended to do this over a table or uncarpeted area. The goal is that if the toothbrush is drooped, it lands on a table that is cleaned regularly.
- If a toothbrush falls on the floor or is contaminated by touching another child's toothbrush it needs to be washed thoroughly with soap and water, rinsing thoroughly by staff.
- Collection of toothbrushes to rinse them cannot be done in a way that causes cross contamination of the toothbrushes with each other- example is collecting all on a comingled tray that the staff then rinse and put away for the children. Best practice is to have children rinse their own toothbrushes and put them away, or have staff just assist with putting them in the holder so that they do not touch each other.
- Ensure when assisting children rinsing toothbrushes you are not touching the bristles and causing this opportunity to cross contaminate (even with gloves)- example: do not rub a toothbrush bristles with your gloved finger, then put it away, and then do the same to the next toothbrush. OCC has pointed this out as an unacceptable practice.
- Toothbrushes and toothbrush holders are not to be put through the dishwasher. Washing with soap and water and using sanitizer is ok if needed for the holders.
- If your class practice is to go directly from eating to toothbrushing, and children are not leaving the table to play between these activities, you can forgo the handwash after the meal and wash hands after toothbrushing instead. If children leave the meal table to go play, they would need to wash their hands first (per OCC requirements to wash hands after the meal).

These best practices were compiled by staff from Ed, Health, and Safety to ensure we are giving guidance that meets best practices and OCC regulations. Thank you all for all the hard work you do every day with children in the classroom! I hope this information helps you all!

Classroom Circle Brushing



1

Sitting at table in circle, children brush teeth as a group activity every day.

2

Give each child a small paper cup, a paper towel and a soft-bristled, child-sized toothbrush.

3

Put a small (pea-sized) dab of fluoride toothpaste on the inside rim of each cup, and have children use their toothbrushes to pick up the dabs of toothpaste.

4

Brush together for two minutes, using an egg timer or a song that lasts for about two minutes.

5

Brush your teeth with the children to set an example, and remind them to brush all their teeth, on all sides.

6

When the two minutes are up, have the children spit any extra toothpaste into their cups, wipe their mouths and throw the cups and paper towels away.

7

Children can go to the sink in groups to rinse their toothbrushes and put the toothbrushes in holders to dry.



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Oral Health for Children

Birth-3 years

- Babies should be seen by the dentist soon after the first tooth comes in, or by one year of age at the latest.
- Milk or formula left on the teeth overnight causes cavities. Babies should never be put to bed with bottles.
- As soon as babies get their first teeth, caregivers should clean them every day with a small smear of fluoride toothpaste.
- Between nine and 24 months of age, children should have at least four fluoride varnish treatments by a health care provider.
- Parents and caregivers should provide healthful snacks. Sodas, sweets and refined starches should be limited or cut out altogether.

3-5 years

- Every Head Start child should have a dental home – an accessible IHS/Tribal dental clinic or private practice where he/she can receive comprehensive oral health care.
- Head Start children should receive fluoride varnish treatments every 3 to 4 months to protect the teeth from cavities.
- Parents should consider having dental sealants applied to a child's molars if he or she is found to be at high risk for cavities.
- Parents and caregivers should make sure children know how important it is to brush their teeth every day with a small (pea-sized) dab of fluoride toothpaste.
- Parents and caregivers should provide healthful snacks. Sodas, sweets and refined starches should be limited or cut out altogether.



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