



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Health

Brush Up on Oral Health



September 2014

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Did You Know?

This poem can be used to help children remind their parents to use the right amount of toothpaste:

*If it foams when I brush,
mom/dad used too much.*



Toothbrushing

Head Start teachers play an important role in promoting good oral health. To help keep children's mouths healthy, toothbrushing should start as soon as the first tooth appears in a baby's mouth. Young children do not have the hand coordination to brush their teeth well, so it is important for an adult to supervise and help them with brushing. Having children brush their teeth helps them develop good oral hygiene habits that can last a lifetime.

This issue of *Brush Up on Oral Health* provides the [American Dental Association's](#) (ADA's) fluoride toothpaste recommendations which were released in February 2014. Toothbrushing in the Head Start program can be done at the sink or at the classroom table. The issue highlights some advantages of brushing at the classroom table and gives step-by-step instructions for how to do this. It also includes a recipe for a healthy snack that can be made in the Head Start classroom or at home.

New Fluoride Toothpaste Recommendations

Brushing with fluoride toothpaste and drinking tap (faucet) water with fluoride is one of the best ways to prevent tooth decay. ADA recommends starting to brush with fluoride toothpaste as soon as the child's first tooth comes into the mouth. For most children, this happens between ages 6 and 10 months. ADA recommends using the following amount of fluoride toothpaste:



Use a smear for children under age 3



Use a pea-size amount for children ages 3 to 6

Toothbrushing at the Classroom Table

Listed below are some advantages of brushing together at the table. These are known as the four Ms.

- **Motivate.** Brushing at the table is a calm, organized way to teach and encourage children to brush their teeth.
- **Model.** Seeing the teacher brush with them helps children understand that toothbrushing is important.
- **Monitor.** Sitting at the child's level instead of standing at the sink lets the teacher see and help children who are having a hard time brushing.
- **Manage.** Brushing together lets the teacher make sure each child spends enough time brushing.



Teaching children to brush at the table is easy. It can be broken down into the following eight steps. A teacher's aide or parent volunteer can help with all the steps.

1. **Set up.** The teacher puts the recommended amount of toothpaste onto the rim of a paper cup for each child. The teacher then places a napkin, the child's labeled toothbrush, and the paper cup with toothpaste at each child's place at the table.
2. **Scoop.** When the teacher tells them to, each child scoops the toothpaste from the rim of the paper cup onto the bristles of their toothbrush.
3. **Brush.** Everyone brushes together for about two minutes. The teacher models brushing the inside, outside, and top of every tooth.
4. **Spit.** Children quietly spit any toothpaste still in their mouth into their cup. It's okay if a child swallows the toothpaste that's left in their mouth. Children shouldn't rinse, so the fluoride left in their mouth has time to soak into the teeth.
5. **Wipe.** Children wipe their face with their napkin to clean off any toothpaste.
6. **Stuff.** Each child stuffs their napkin into their cup. The napkin will soak up any residue in the cup.
7. **Toss.** Children place their cup, with the napkin inside, in the wastebasket.
8. **Put Away.** Children rinse their toothbrushes and put them in a holder where they stand upright to air dry.

Make sure children do not pass germs from one toothbrush to another. This can happen by rinsing a toothbrush over another toothbrush, stirring toothbrushes in a sink filled with water, or bumping toothbrushes together in play.

Cook's Corner: Deviled Eggs

Here's a delicious, healthy snack that children can make as a class project or at home with their families.

Ingredients

- 6 hardboiled eggs, peeled
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon white vinegar
- 1 teaspoon yellow mustard
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon paprika, for garnish (optional)



Photo credit: mealmakeovermoms | Foter | Creative Commons

Directions

1. Slice the eggs in half lengthwise.
2. Scoop out the yolks and place in a bowl.
3. Place the egg white halves on a plate or platter.
4. Use a fork to mash the yolks into a fine crumble.
5. Add the mayonnaise, vinegar, mustard, salt, and pepper, and mix well.
6. Fill the egg white halves with a teaspoon of the yolk mixture.
7. Sprinkle each filled egg white half with paprika (optional), and serve.

Safety tip: An adult should slice ingredients.

Contact Us

Beth Lowe: eal38@georgetown.edu • 202-687-1864
Katrina Holt: kholt@georgetown.edu • 202-784-9551

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