

# Tooth Brushing Tips

- With infants gently rub the gums and new teeth with a soft cloth and water after every feeding.

That is all that is required. Do not use toothpaste.

- As the back teeth erupt you can gradually introduce a small soft toothbrush.
- Soften the bristles with warm water only. No toothpaste.
- There are small brushes that fit over your finger to make life easier.
- Brush at least twice a day.
- Cleaning before nap time and bed time are most important.
- Children's mouths are different than adults.
- Use smaller toothbrushes with soft rounded bristles designed for gentle cleaning.
- Brush bristles should easily fit between the four front lower teeth; otherwise it is too large.



- Gradually introduce children's toothpaste at age two.
- Most toothpaste is heavily flavored and too strong for small children's taste buds.
- Use a very small amount of toothpaste (about the size of a grain of rice).
- Most toothpaste produces foam which children do not like.
- Small children will likely swallow all of the toothpaste that they use. Therefore, do not use fluoridated toothpaste until you are sure that your child will not swallow it.
- Make a game of spitting into the sink to encourage your child not to swallow the toothpaste.



- All major brands of adult toothpaste have fluoride in them which can harm developing adult teeth if swallowed. Please read the labels carefully. Adult toothpaste can be used after all baby teeth have fallen out, usually around the age of 12.
- Health food stores often carry non-fluoridated tooth paste to use until your child can control their swallowing better.
- Avoid toothpaste with sparkles (microbeads) in it. The plastic sparkle material can cause gum irritations in some people.



- Make brushing a family affair. If possible have every member of the family brush their teeth together.
- Be a good role model. Let your child watch you brush your teeth properly, then help them brush their own teeth.
- Brushing can be a fun time. Listen to music. It takes two minutes to brush your teeth well. Therefore, try playing your child's favorite song every time you brush their teeth. Do not stop until the song finishes.

## TEAM BRUSHING

- Parents should help children:
  - brush their teeth at least once a day until the age of 8,



- floss their teeth at least once a day, preferably at bedtime, until the age of 10.

- Parents may find it easier to try different positions for different areas of the mouth.

Note the enclosed pictures as examples.

- Support your child's head with your shoulder.
- Have your child tip their head up to prevent drooling, and to allow you to see their back teeth as well as their upper teeth.

- Sometimes it is easier if you sit on the floor, or in a chair with your child in front of you. Place the child's head in your lap with their body between your legs. Place your child's arms under your knees to control their arms so they do not interfere with what you are doing. For smaller children, using a change table may be helpful.

- With really young toddlers or uncooperative children you may need two people. One person holds the body and arms still, while the second person brushes the teeth.

-You may also try wrapping your child in a soft towel to control their arms while you brush their teeth.

- Never force a child – be patient. The more you do this - it will soon become routine and easy.

- Some young children like to hold a brush of their own while you brush their teeth. Gradually let your child do more of the brushing themselves as you supervise and give constructive feedback.

- Try to find creative ways to make brushing fun. Maybe brush in different washrooms or use different flavors of toothpaste on different days.

- Positive reinforcement is key. Praise correct behavior.

- Use our brushing chart. Children love stickers. Place a sticker on the chart every time that they do a good job of brushing.



**Remember: Nothing to eat or drink after you brush your teeth.**