

# Toothbrushing Guidelines

## Description

Tooth brushing in a centre environment supports consistent oral health messages and practises at home. Good oral hygiene practice should be established at an early stage in a child's life and become an integral part of normal daily hygiene.

## Fluoride Toothpaste

Regular daily tooth brushing with a fluoride toothpaste twice a day is highly effective in preventing dental decay.

Use of fluoride toothpaste in a centre environment includes:

- Adult strength toothpaste provided, containing at least 1000 ppm (parts per million) fluoride, is used.
- A smear of toothpaste is used for all children under 5 years and a pea-size for over 5 years. *(Image 1)*
- Where toothpaste is shared, staff should put it onto a clean surface such as a plate or paper towel. *(Image 2)*
- There is enough spacing between the quantities of toothpaste to allow children to put it on their brush without cross-contamination.
- Toothpaste must only be given out at the time the child is ready to brush.
- Closely supervise children who have their own tubes of toothpaste to use.
- Staff should cover any cuts, abrasions or breaks in their skin with a waterproof dressing.

*Image 1*



*Smear*

*Pea-size*

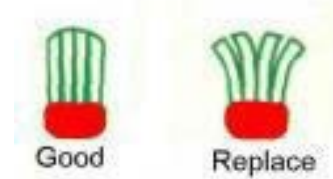
*Image 2*



## Toothbrushes

The size and shape of a toothbrush is important for brushing a child's teeth correctly.

- Toothbrushes are the right size for the age and ability of the child.
- Toothbrushes are replaced once a term, or sooner if required (for example, when the bristles become splayed).
- Toothbrushes are individually identifiable for each child.
- For storage, see next page



## Tooth brushing process

### Key tips:

- 1 Brush teeth for 2 minutes
  - 2 Spit, don't rinse after brushing
  - 3 Advisable to have a mirror in front of children when brushing
- Children need help with brushing their teeth until around the age of 7.
  - Supervise children when brushing their teeth.
  - Staff should stand behind the child while helping them brush their teeth.
  - Tooth brushing takes place at a time which is most suitable for each centre.
  - Children are discouraged from swallowing toothpaste during or after brushing their teeth.
  - After tooth brushing, brushes are rinsed thoroughly and individually under cold running water and replaced in the storage system to allow them to air dry.

## Storage systems for Toothbrushes

Toothbrushes are a potential source of infection. Storage systems need to prevent cross-contamination. Toothbrushes need to be stored in appropriate storage systems.

- Toothbrushes should stand in the upright position or in individual ventilated holders.
- Storage systems should allow sufficient distance between toothbrushes to avoid cross-contamination.
- Storage systems should display symbols that match with those on the children's toothbrush so they can easily identify their toothbrush.
- Storage systems which do not have covers are stored within a specific trolley or in a clean, dry cupboard.
- Do not store toothbrushes in toilet areas, store away from children, at adult height or in a suitable trolley.



## Cleaning of Toothbrushes and storage systems

Appropriate cleaning procedures are in place to ensure that cross-contamination is reduced. Good cleaning practice should be an important part of a childcare setting.

- Manufacturers' guidelines are followed when cleaning and maintaining storage systems, including dishwasher cleaning, where appropriate.
- Storage systems, trolleys and storage areas are cleaned, rinsed and dried at least once a week (more if soiled) by staff using warm water and soap.
- Care is taken to make sure toothbrushes do not cross-contaminate when being removed from or replaced in storage systems.
- To avoid cross-contamination from spit while tooth brushing, the storage system should not be placed directly beside the children while they brush their teeth.
- Storage systems are replaced if cracks, scratches or rough surfaces develop.
- Any toothbrushes dropped onto the floor are thrown out and replaced.
- Toothbrushes must not be soaked in bleach, other cleaner/disinfectant or placed in boiling water
- Tubes of toothpaste can be cleaned with a damp tissue.

## Further information

For further information on toothbrushing, please visit [Ministry of Health website](#) or the [Bee Healthy website, 5 tips to keep you smiling](#). You can also contact your Community Oral Health Service on **0800 TALK TEETH** (0800 825 583).