

A Little Book of Healthy Smiles



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Introduction

We know that seeing a child's happy, healthy smile can brighten up a parent's day. We also know that juggling work, school commitments, kids' activities and behaviour can make it difficult to help your children to establish an oral health routine – especially if they're reluctant to brush (which they often are!).

As part of an oral health routine, dentists recommend that children brush for two minutes, twice a day with fluoride toothpaste suitable for their age group. But how easy is it to get children to do this very important task each day?

To find out, we asked a focus group* of UK mums to record their experience of their children's oral health routine and any challenges they have, as well as sharing their helpful tips. We also surveyed over 2,000 parents of children aged 2-11.**

Mum's Teething Problems

Our survey found that, according to parents...

- Nearly three quarters of children brush their teeth at least twice a day
- Over 80% of children don't brush their teeth for the recommended two minutes
- Nearly three quarters of children have used some kind of technique to delay or avoid brushing their teeth

Our focus group also revealed that:

1. Children often hurry when brushing their teeth
2. Tiredness, general reluctance and lack of time are some of the most common problems mums experience when helping their children to establish an effective oral health routine
3. Three out of five mums find brushing their child's teeth for them is the most effective way to help them learn how to brush
4. Four out of five families say that what they would find most helpful in helping their children to learn how to care for their teeth is more oral health education in schools and nurseries

Five ways to a healthier smile: Top tooth brushing tips by mums for mums

From these insights, it's clear that many families may benefit from a helping hand in getting their kids to brush more effectively. From singing songs to teeth inspections, we know that mums use a variety of techniques to help their children care for their teeth. Here, our mums share their top tips for overcoming the challenge of helping their children to care for their teeth. We've also shared some dental advice from our dentists.



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Problem:

How can I help my children to brush their teeth thoroughly?

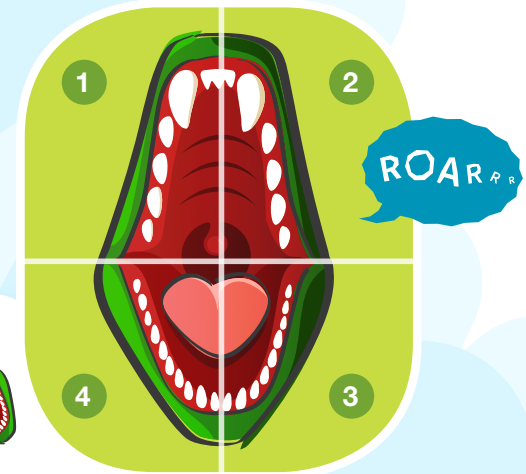
What mum says

"My children do not always brush their teeth thoroughly. They rush, tell me they have brushed when they have not and some days are simply uninterested in caring for their teeth. To help encourage them to brush properly I use many different techniques but find showing and telling them what to do particularly helpful. I remind them to brush carefully, I encourage them to brush with me and I ensure that I explain to them that keeping their teeth clean means that they won't get holes in their teeth and need fillings."

Emma, mother of two children aged 8 and 10

Dentist tip

It's common for children to rush through their brushing which means that some of the teeth surfaces get missed. To help, get your child to imagine dividing their mouth into four main sections and brush each section for 30 seconds:



This means they're more likely to brush all the back teeth, and each tooth surface.

If you think they've missed any teeth, follow up by brushing their teeth yourself after they've finished.

To help reach the back teeth, get your child to pretend to be a lion or dinosaur and give you a big roar! This helps them to open their mouth wide for you.

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Problem:

How can I overcome my children's reluctance to brush?

What mum says

"Even though they are young my children can be reluctant to brush their teeth especially when they get distracted by the TV and playing with toys. To help encourage them to want to brush I make brushing their teeth a fun family time where I help them to brush. This ensures that they can see and feel how to brush their teeth properly and allows me to talk to them about the dentist and why he will want to know that they are looking after their teeth."

Daisy, mother of two children aged 4 and 2

Dentist tip

Making brushing a fun, family activity can be the key to successful brushing. Why not encourage your child to:

- ☺ Choose a fun toothbrush with their favourite character on
- ☺ Make their own toothbrush holder by decorating a cup with stickers or coloured paper
- ☺ Brush to a special song or choose their favourite CD track
- ☺ Fill in a brushing reward chart

Brushing chart

You can download a four-week brushing chart from our website:

www.bigfamilybrushup.co.uk



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Problem:

How can I stop my children from hurrying when they brush their teeth when they are tired?

What mum says

"My son brushes his teeth very quickly and not for long enough. He will often do this when he has wobbly teeth so I have to monitor his tooth brushing closely. To help my four-year-old learn to brush for long enough I find using an egg timer really helpful. To encourage them to brush after a long day I try to make it enjoyable by making sure they have their own children's toothpaste and by using a tooth brushing song which my daughter really likes. If my children have had a busy day and are overtired I will step in and help them to brush their teeth. This way I know that their teeth have been brushed thoroughly."

Liz, mother of two children aged 8 and 4

Dentist tip

There are certain times of the day when brushing will be more effective for children, as well as better for their teeth:

Morning brush

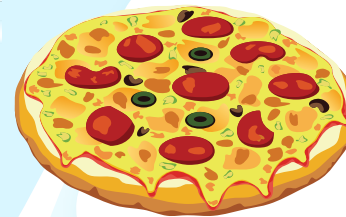
- brush as soon as they wake up

During our survey, 63% of parents said their children brush after breakfast. This could actually be harmful to their teeth if they've had sugary or acidic things such as orange juice, sugary cereal, jams or chocolate spreads. Tooth enamel is softer for up to an hour after eating or drinking sugary or acidic things and can be damaged if teeth are brushed within this timeframe. Instead, get children to brush as soon as they wake up. With the rush to get to school on time, it also means that they're more likely to brush for longer as it won't be the last thing you're scrambling to do before dashing out the door!

Evening brush

- brush at least an hour after dinner

Similar to the morning brushing tip, it's good to wait an hour after eating before children brush their teeth. Once they've brushed, avoid any further snacks or drinks apart from water until the morning (not including babies feeding on milk during the night).



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Problem:

How can I help my child to be more enthusiastic about brushing their teeth?

What mum says

"To help my children to learn how to brush I make sure cleaning their teeth is a family event when we brush together. Brushing with an older sibling has really helped my youngest know what to do. I have also found giving them responsibility really helpful. I try and let the children choose how they brush by asking them whether they would like to wash their face or brush their teeth first and what toothpaste they want to use. This has helped them to feel like they have more say in brushing and have more interest in caring for their teeth".

Katrina, mother to two children aged 8 and 10



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Problem:

How can I make sure my child brushes for two minutes?

What mum says

"My son often tries to avoid brushing; sometimes he even hides under the sofa! To help make sure he brushes effectively I reward good behaviour with a promise of an extra bed time story and take away privileges such as TV time when they do not brush for long enough. I try and use positive words such as 'when we have brushed our teeth we can have a story' rather than saying 'you won't have a story if you don't clean your teeth'. I have found this much more effective than using threats or shouting."

Rosie, Mother to two children aged 2 and 5

Dentist tip

A toothbrush timer is a great investment as younger children don't always have a concept of what two minutes feels like. There are lots of timers available from the cheap sand egg timers to fun electric ones.

There are some great brushing apps available that you can download for free. Brush DJ plays two minutes of music from your existing playlists; whilst for those aged five and under, Brusheez Little Monsters is a toothbrush timer app that allows children to personalise their chosen characters.

Visit your preferred app store for more details on these and other brushing apps.



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Dental advice

More top tips for kids' brushing:



Use a toothbrush recommended by your dental team and get your kids to choose their favourite colours or characters



Use a suitable fluoride strength toothpaste for their age group:

- Under three years old – 1000ppm
- Over three years old – 1350-1500ppm



Find a toothpaste that they like the flavour of – there are many on the market



Children easily swallow toothpaste so it's best to use a smear of toothpaste for babies and children up to three years of age, and a pea-sized blob for children aged three to six



Brush for two minutes, twice a day. This should be last thing at night and on one other occasion during the day – usually in the morning.



Divide brushing into four sections in the mouth and brush each quadrant for 30 seconds – upper left, upper right, lower right, lower left. Brush in a circular motion and brush each surface of each tooth – tops and sides.



Spit the toothpaste out after brushing but **don't** rinse. Rinsing washes away the protective fluoride



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The Last Word



Helping your children to learn how to brush their teeth properly can ensure that they learn good oral health habits that last them a lifetime. To help encourage effective tooth brushing we're calling on the UK to join us on the **'Big Family Brush-Up'** to help children to brush up on their oral health know-how.

You'll find plenty of tips and brushing techniques on our website www.denplan.co.uk/myteeth but for more advice on protecting your families oral healthcare be sure to speak with your dentist.

*Focus group consisted of five families – each family had two children aged between 2 and 10 years. Families were asked to fill in a diary for two weeks during May 2015 on their children's brushing habits. The families were also asked to fill in a short questionnaire.

**Paediatric Oral Health Survey conducted by OnePoll on behalf of Denplan. Survey was carried out online between 22 May – 3rd June 2015, surveying 2000 parents of children aged 2 - 11 years of age.

Denplan Ltd, trading as Simplyhealth Professionals, Simplyhealth House,
Victoria Road, Winchester, SO23 7RG, UK.

Tel: +44 (0) 1962 828 000. Fax: +44 (0) 1962 840 846.

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