

Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.

Activity: Caring for our teeth

Teaching children to care for their teeth from a young age is beneficial for their oral health. Good oral health leads to helping children to bite and chew, feel confident when they smile and supports their speech and language development.

In this activity you will find a range of ideas to help you increase children's understanding of how to make their teeth strong and keep them clean and healthy.

Learning aims

- Understand the importance of oral health
- Explore healthy choices
- Engage in physical activities to improve oral health.



Resources

- Handheld safety mirrors
- New toothbrushes
- Dolls/soft toys
- Timer
- Role play dentist props
- A book or video about visiting the dentist such as *Maisy, Charley and the wobbly tooth* by Lucy Cousins
- Images of different food and drinks which are both good and bad for teeth e.g. a piece of broccoli, milk, chocolate, fizzy drink.

Activity outline

1. Engage children in discussion about their teeth. Explore what we use our teeth for and provide children with handheld safety mirrors so they can look at their own teeth and each other's teeth, encouraging them to use rich, descriptive language such as hard, round, pointy
2. Discuss with children how important it is to take care of our teeth and explore what they know about caring for their teeth and what experiences they have had, such as visiting the dentist

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- 3. Brushing teeth:** Discuss the importance of brushing teeth twice a day for two minutes with a pea size amount of toothpaste. There are a range of educational videos and songs online which you could choose from to share with children produced by children's favourites such as Dr Ranj, Hey Duggee and CBeebies. Using a doll or soft toy, model how to brush teeth with a toothbrush, demonstrating how to brush up and down, side to side and round and round, along the top and bottom, both back and front. Enable children to practise on a doll or soft toy. Set a timer so children can experience how long two minutes is and encourage them to use a timer at home when brushing their own teeth. Make this even more fun by inviting children to stand up and pretend to be the toothbrush themselves, demonstrating the moves they need to make by jumping up and down, swaying side to side and turning round and round
- 4. Visiting the dentist:** Share with children a book or video about visiting the dentist. Discuss the experience and enable children to re-enact the experience by providing some role play dentist props such as an overcoat, safety glasses, handheld safety mirrors, toothbrushes in your role play provision (explain to children that toothbrushes should not be put in their mouths for safety reasons but can be used to practise on dolls and soft toys).

Extension ideas

- Arrange for an oral health professional to visit your setting to talk about tooth brushing – if possible, enable parents to attend this session to promote oral health at home
- Introduce a supervised toothbrushing programme (see this week's top tips)
- Healthy choices: Explore with children what might happen if we don't take care of our teeth. Talk about and share images of healthy food and drinks that help to grow strong teeth, and those that do not, encouraging children to organise these into two groups.

NDNA products to support you with this activity

- [Oral health](#) – blog
- [Healthy eating](#) – factsheet.