

Oral Health Practices

Head Start Performance Standards

§ 1302.43

Policy

Head Start promotes the dental health of children and families. Dental health in children is important for chewing food, normal speech development, and good self-image. Baby teeth that are lost too early can cause the permanent teeth to come in crowded or out of line. Age-appropriate dental hygiene to remove the plaque that can cause cavities and harm the gums and bones around teeth will be practiced during every Head Start class day. Support will be given to families to help them maintain effective dental hygiene in the home. Parent education will include discussion on the role and benefits of fluoride to help prevent cavities and repair early tooth decay.

Procedure

All Sites and Ages

Before the school year begins, teaching staff will ensure that they have enough toothbrushes (infant or junior brushes), toothbrush holders, tubes of fluoride toothpaste, and disposable rinse cups for all children in the class. Each toothbrush will be labeled with the child's name. Teaching staff will notify Health Services of any toothbrushing supply shortages. Sites with infants will ensure that the site has an adequate supply of 2 x 2-inch disposable gauze and synthetic (non-latex) gloves.

All toothbrushes will be replaced at three- to four-month intervals. Health Services will send new toothbrushes for children and teachers to classrooms in September before the start of school, after Winter Break, after Spring Break and again at the end of June for Full Day centers only. Fluoride toothpaste and paper cups for rinsing are also sent at the beginning of the school year; after that, staff can request additional supplies by submitting a Health Supply Order form. **Any toothbrush that is contaminated with blood or is frayed must be discarded and replaced.**

Teaching staff will determine when and how toothbrushing will take place, considering the classroom layout and developmental stage of the children. Toothbrushing may take place in small groups, a large group, or individually. These conditions must be met:

- Tooth brushing will occur within one half hour of eating a meal.
- Toothpaste containing fluoride will be used as soon as a child's first tooth erupts.
- Teachers will assist children aged two and older with brushing. (Refer to procedures below for infants and children under two years of age).
- Teachers/children will work towards goal of at least two minutes spent actually brushing their teeth.
- At least one adult must model appropriate toothbrushing. The remaining staff will supervise the process to make sure that children are brushing in a safe and sanitary manner and redirect them if they are playing with their toothbrushes.

Staff may use music or chants as long as all surfaces of teeth (outside, inside, and biting edge) are cleaned and the tongue is brushed. The children will be taught to angle their toothbrushes at an approximately 45-degree angle against the gum line and to use short, gentle strokes (wiggles).

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If toothbrushing or rinsing occurs at the sink, teacher must supervise the sink area and sanitize it immediately after brushing is completed.

Toothbrushes must be stored out of reach of children in a well-ventilated space. Toothbrushes may not be stored in a cabinet with chemicals.

Families will be given information to promote and support regular dental hygiene in the home; best practices aimed at preventing development of early childhood caries, including the beneficial use of topical and systemic fluoride; and resources/services for dental treatment.

Children Ages Two and Older

Follow these steps before and after brushing to ensure that procedures are safe, sanitary, and effective.

1. All adults assisting with toothbrushing will wash their hands before and after helping a child or group of children with brushing.
2. Prepare toothbrushes and rinse cups in advance.
 - Rinse each toothbrush *individually* under running water to moisten it.
 - Fill paper cups with a small amount of water and smear or dab a pea-sized amount of toothpaste on the edge of each cup.
3. Pass out brushes individually or supervise the holder to ensure that each child takes only their own brush.
4. Guide and model effective brushing technique so that all tooth surfaces are cleaned; assist individual children as needed.
5. After brushing is completed, encourage each child to rinse their mouth and spit in cup.
6. Make sure each child's toothbrush is kept separate from the other brushes, individually rinsed, and put back in the holder.
7. Children should dispose of the cup with rinse water in a lined trash can and proceed to the sink to wash their hands.
8. *Rinse brushes individually under running water.* Place brushes in the holder with all heads facing the same direction and allow them to air dry overnight.

Children One to Two Years Old

Teachers will brush each child's teeth with a soft bristled toothbrush once daily after a meal, using a **very** small dab of fluoride toothpaste. Follow these before and after brushing to ensure that procedures are safe, sanitary, and effective.

1. All adults assisting with tooth brushing will wash hands before and after brushing a child's teeth.
2. Prepare the toothbrush and rinse cup in advance.
 - Rinse toothbrush *individually* under running water to moisten.
 - Fill a paper cup with a small amount of water, smear a *very* small dab of toothpaste on the edge of each cup, and transfer it to the child's brush.
3. Tell the child that it's time to brush before beginning.
4. Gently brush all tooth surfaces as the child permits. Talk to and reassure the child while brushing.
5. After brushing is completed, offer the child a cup of water for rinsing and spitting.
6. Rinse all brushes *individually* under running water and place them back in the holder with all heads facing the same direction. Allow the rinsed toothbrushes to air dry overnight before storing them in the cabinet.

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7. Dispose of the cup with rinse water in a lined trash can, wash your hands, and help the child wash their hands.
8. Repeat these steps until all the children have brushed.

Infants Under One Year (without teeth)

At least once daily, wipe infants' gums with a gauze pad, following these steps.

1. Wash your hands, put on disposable exam gloves, cover your finger with a gauze pad and gently wipe the infant's gums.
2. Remove gloves, dispose of the gauze and gloves in a lined trash can, and wash your hands again. Always wash your hands and change gloves before wiping each child's gums.

For an older infant with several baby teeth that have emerged, you may begin to brush teeth/gums with soft bristled infant brush with fluoride toothpaste using a gentle motion.