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Supervised Toothbrushing Toolkit



Supervised Toothbrushing for Schools and Early Years Providers

The Big Brush Club Supervised Toothbrushing Toolkit is a comprehensive resource, designed to help staff in early years and school settings implement supervised toothbrushing into their daily routine.

At Home Dental's Big Brush Club is committed to ensuring improved children's oral health. The scheme is aimed at 3 to 5 year olds attending reception, nursery or preschool in areas of deprivation. Setting up a supervised toothbrushing programme is a way to support oral health in the classroom setting. The aim of the programme is for every child to brush their teeth with fluoride toothpaste once a day at school, preschool or nursery, and ideally twice a day at home. This helps to encourage children to brush their teeth from a young age, and ultimately helps reduce oral health inequalities amongst children.

At Home Dental specialise in bringing dentistry into the community. With many years of experience, we provide a unique service that delivers a full range of dental services directly to homes, care homes and work places. By embracing new technology, we can provide the latest in dentistry and ensure the very best dental care is given.

We provide expert training to Early Years teachers and staff so that they become Oral Healthcare Champions (OHC) and are able to run the programme successfully. All materials are supplied, including toothbrushes and toothpaste. Our facilitators (who are fully qualified and registered with the General Dental Council) are available to be contacted directly for advice and support. We have plenty of resources available for parents/guardians, educators and children on our website to help support good oral health in children.

Early years providers are responsible for promoting good health, including oral health of children attending their setting, as set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage Strategic Framework 2022.¹ Setting up a supervised toothbrushing programme is a recommendation made on the UK government website as a way to promote good oral health in Early Years settings.² Information for this toolkit has been sourced from the 2016 Public Health England guidance document 'Improving oral health: supervised tooth brushing programme toolkit'.³

(1) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

(2) <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/safeguarding-and-welfare/oral-health>

(3) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-oral-health-supervised-tooth-brushing-programme-toolkit>



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Background

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has issued guidelines urging schools and nurseries to actively support children in brushing their teeth, with a particular emphasis on disadvantaged regions of England.

Tooth decay and gum disease are largely preventable. On average, children miss three school days each year due to dental issues.

Recent data indicates that visible tooth decay affects one in eight three year olds and one in four five year olds. Alarmingly, over 25,000 children aged five to nine have required hospitalisation because of tooth decay.

Close to 25% of 5 year olds in England suffer from tooth decay, typically affecting an average of three to four teeth. Tooth extraction stands as one of the primary medical procedures for children under the age of 6 in hospitals. Furthermore, it ranks as the leading cause of hospital admissions for children aged 6 to 10. Notably, children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are at a higher risk of experiencing tooth decay.

Children experiencing toothache or requiring treatment may endure pain or infections that can have broader repercussions, affecting their eating habits, sleep, social interactions, and learning.

Big Brush Club is here to help prevent decay by encouraging children to brush their teeth twice a day, forming positive lifetime habits that will make a difference.

Daily application of fluoride toothpaste to teeth reduces the incidence and severity of tooth decay in children. For example, moving from brushing once a day to twice a day lowers an individual's risk of developing dental caries by 14%.

Reducing the consumption of sugary foods and drinks and maintaining regular dental check-ups, as advised by dentists, are also vital steps in maintaining oral health.

Sources:

Royal College of Surgeons England | GOV UK: Health Matters: Child Dental Health
GOV UK: Delivering Better Oral Health Toolkit



Required Kit

You will need some supplies in order to run your supervised toothbrushing sessions, most of which we supply for you. Here's an introduction to the kit you will receive.

We Supply the Following:

Toothbrushes

We supply a new toothbrush at the start of each term for each child. Their toothbrush will be the perfect size and softness of bristle, and will fit and be stored conveniently in a toothbrush rack. The children will use these each day during their supervised toothbrushing sessions.

Toothbrush rack

Safe and hygienic, your toothbrush rack will keep brushes separate from each other in a clean and sanitary space. Each toothbrush space is labelled with the same symbols as those on the toothbrushes, making it easy to identify whose is whose. They come in various colours and a lid is provided to cover the toothbrushes when not in use.

Toothpaste

You will receive a supply of toothpaste to use in your daily brushing sessions. The toothpaste will contain at least 1,350 parts per million of fluoride, which is dentist recommended and plays an active role in strengthening teeth and preventing decay. Only staff should handle and dispense the toothpaste.

Reward charts (optional)

Toothbrushing charts can be found on our website. Reward charts could also be on display in the classroom for the children to keep track of their progress.



You Will Need the Following to Hand:

Hand towels

Hand towels (or tissues) are used to dispense toothpaste onto, children then use their toothbrush to scrape up the toothpaste, as this minimises the cross infection.. It's a tried and tested method which is quick and easy to implement in the classroom.

Single-use gloves

To keep infection control to a minimum, single-use disposable gloves are used when handling soiled toothbrushes and other associated equipment.

Household detergent

Household detergent (e.g washing up liquid) and warm water are used to clean the sink at the end of each session. It's also used to clean the rack at least once a week (more if soiled).

Household gloves

When cleaning the sink and the toothbrush rack with a detergent, household gloves should be worn.

Bin

Make sure that you have a bin handy for safe and effective disposal of paper towels. This will help minimise any risk of cross infection.

Sink

You will be using water to rinse the toothbrushes at the end of each session. Your sink will also be a designated area for cleaning the rack.

Big Brush Club Tune

Music is an effective tool to motivate children with their daily toothbrushing. Use the Big Brush Club tune and let them have fun whilst brushing!

Information for parents/guardians

Big Brush Club will provide an introductory letter as well as a consent form that can be issued to parents/guardians. Ensure that parents are provided with this information, it can help to identify any known allergies to toothpastes.



Dry Toothbrushing Technique

We find that the dry brushing technique appeals most in a classroom setting, but you will also find instructions on a subsequent page for a wet brushing technique. Please choose the model which best meets the needs of your classroom.

Hand washing

Staff should always wash hands before and after a supervised toothbrushing session. This is important in order to prevent cross infection.

Dispensing toothpaste

Staff dispense a small pea sized amount of fluoride toothpaste onto a paper towel, one for each child. This is an easy and quick way to give all children toothpaste in a hygienic manner.

Toothbrush collection

Under supervision, children collect their toothbrush from the rack, along with a paper towel with toothpaste on. They use their toothbrush to scrape up the toothpaste and keep hold of the paper towel for later on. Each child's brush will be individually identifiable through use of the toothbrushing rack and symbols.

Toothbrushing time!

When all children have toothpaste on their brushes, they may be seated or standing while toothbrushing takes place.

A staff member should be on hand to monitor and supervise children's toothbrushing; It is important to discourage children from swallowing any toothpaste.

A timer can be set or a two minute video can be played while the children focus on brushing their teeth. You can also play the Big Brush Club tune to ensure the children have fun.

Wiping the mouth

When the two minutes are up, children use their paper towel to remove any excess toothpaste from the mouth. These are then disposed of into a bin immediately after use.



Children should be discouraged from rinsing their mouth after brushing, as doing this will rinse off fluoride and significantly decrease its associated benefits.

Rinsing and storing toothbrushes

Children can either rinse their toothbrush themselves, one at a time under a running tap or staff can do this (ensuring single-use disposable gloves are worn when doing so). Staff should supervise and control the tap. Each toothbrush is then returned to the rack and left to air dry.

Cleaning down

Staff wearing ordinary household gloves clean down the sink area with detergent, and then wash their hands to finish.

Reward charts (optional)

Staff may wish to give children the opportunity to have a stamp or tick on their individual toothbrushing reward chart or alternatively to display a reward chart for the whole class which they update at the end of the session.



Wet Toothbrushing Technique

Hand washing

Staff should always wash hands both before and after a supervised toothbrushing session. This is important in order to prevent cross infection.

Dispensing toothpaste

Staff dispense a small pea sized amount of fluoride toothpaste onto a paper towel, one for each child. This is an easy and quick way to give all children toothpaste in a hygienic manner.

Toothbrush collection

Under supervision, children collect their toothbrush from the rack, along with a paper towel with toothpaste on. They use their toothbrush to scrape up the toothpaste and keep hold of the paper towel for later on. Each child's brush will be individually identifiable through use of the toothbrushing rack and symbols.

Toothbrushing time!

Toothbrushing will then begin at the designated sink area.

A staff member should be on hand to monitor and supervise children's toothbrushing. It is important to discourage children from swallowing any toothpaste.

A timer can be set or a two-minute video can be played while the children focus on brushing their teeth. You can also play the fun Big Brush Club tune to ensure the children have fun.

To the sink

A member of staff opens the tap and each child spits the excess toothpaste out into the sink, before rinsing off their toothbrush under the tap. The tap can be left running and a paper towel handed to children to wipe around their mouth, making sure to discard it immediately into the bin. Children should be discouraged from rinsing their mouth after brushing, as doing this will rinse off fluoride and significantly decrease its associated benefits.

Storing toothbrushes

Each toothbrush is then returned to the rack and left to air dry.



Cleaning down

Staff wearing ordinary household gloves clean down the sink area with detergent, and then wash their hands to finish.

Reward charts (optional)

Staff may wish to give children the opportunity to have a stamp or tick on their individual toothbrushing reward chart or alternatively to display a reward chart for the whole class which they update at the end of the session.



How much toothpaste and which toothbrush?

Toothpaste

Under 3 years of age

A smear of toothpaste containing no less than 1,000 parts per million (ppm) fluoride should be used for children under 3 years.

Over 3 years of age

A pea-sized amount of toothpaste containing at least 1,350 parts per million (ppm) fluoride should be used for children aged over 3 years.

Fluoride:

The fluoride contained in toothpaste has a number of advantages, including:

- ✓ It helps to create stronger enamel when teeth are forming.
- ✓ It helps teeth become more resistant to acid attacks
- ✓ When in the saliva, it stops teeth de-mineralising (1st stage of decay) and helps teeth to re-mineralise (go back to normal strength).

Toothbrushes

Toothbrushes should have a small head size (the toothbrush needs to be small enough to reach behind the back teeth and brush them easily). The bristles should be medium/soft so that they do not hurt the gums.



Brushing tips

Step 1. Outside

Brush the outside surface of each tooth using small circular motions.

Step 2. Inside

Brush the inside surface of each tooth using the same circular motions.

Step 3. To The Back

Brush the tops of the back teeth, the chewing surfaces, using a forward and backward motion.

Step 4. To The Front

Tilt your toothbrush vertically to brush behind each front tooth using small up and down strokes. Remember to brush both the top and bottom teeth!

Step 5. Tongue

Don't forget to brush your tongue. Lots of germs and bacteria hide here!

TOP TIPS!

- ✓ Brush your teeth for 2 minutes so you can keep your smile bright! Our two minute-long Big Brush Club tune helps keep track of time.
- ✓ Use fluoride toothpaste. Fluoride helps keep your teeth strong and healthy!
- ✓ Angle the toothbrush at a 45 degree angle so that the bristles reach the gums too.
- ✓ Brush at least twice a day. Once in the morning and once last thing before you go to bed.
 - ✓ Begin at the back of the mouth (upper or lower) and then gradually work your way towards the front.
 - ✗ Don't rinse with water after brushing, just spit!



Infection and Contamination Control

It is important to be aware of cross contamination and infection control when implementing the supervised toothbrushing scheme in your classroom. Here are some guidelines for you to follow.

- ✓ Staff members must wash their hands prior to and after toothbrushing sessions.
- ✓ Ensure each child's toothbrush is easily identifiable.
- ✓ Ensure all cuts, abrasions, and breaks in the skin are covered with a waterproof dressing before commencing a toothbrushing session.
- ✓ Ensure the toothbrushing rack displays the symbols corresponding with those on the toothbrushes to allow individual identification.
- ✓ When toothbrushes are being rinsed at the sink, ensure a member of staff is controlling the tap.
- ✓ Once rinsing is complete the toothbrush should then be carefully shaken over the sink to dislodge excess water. Toothbrushes should not touch the sink or surrounding areas.
- ✓ Ensure toothbrush racks are cleaned, rinsed and dried at least once a week (more if soiled) by staff using warm water and household detergent. Disinfectant wipes are not recommended for cleaning the toothbrush racks.
- ✓ Ensure sinks are cleaned by staff wearing household gloves and using household detergent at the end of each session.
- ✓ Use the lids provided when not in use to prevent contamination and air-borne dust and bacteria settling on toothbrushes.
- ✓ Ensure toothbrushes are stored in their designated toothbrush rack and allowed to air dry after use before placing the lid on.
 - ✓ The racks should be stored in a clean dry area (e.g cupboard, or shelf at adult height).
 - ✓ Toothbrushes are replaced once a term, or sooner if required (for example, if a toothbrush is dropped, or the bristles become splayed).



Do's

- ✓ Ensure toothbrushes are individually identifiable enabling each child to recognise their own brush.
- ✓ Store the rack upright and in a location where it cannot be knocked over.
- ✓ Allow the toothbrushes to air dry in the rack before placing the lid on.
- ✓ Regularly check the toothbrush racks and lids for signs of damage and replace if needed.
- ✓ Rinse brushes individually.

Don'ts

- × Dry in any other way other than natural air drying.
- × Don't allow brushes to touch each other. Keep them separated at all times.
- × Don't allow children to dispense the toothpaste.
- × Don't dispense toothpaste directly onto the toothbrushes.
- × Don't rinse the toothbrushes together in the sink.
- × Don't store toothbrushes and toothbrush racks in a toilet area.
- × Don't allow children to control the tap.
- × Don't place the toothbrush rack directly beside the children while toothbrushing takes place to avoid contamination via spray.
- × Don't continue using a toothbrush if it has been dropped on the floor. Replace it with a new one immediately.



Cleaning Procedures

Good cleaning practices should be an integral part of the supervised toothbrushing scheme and these guidelines should be followed.

Do's

- ✓ Wear household gloves when cleaning toothbrush racks and sinks.
- ✓ Clean, rinse and dry the toothbrush racks at least once a week (more if soiled) using warm water and household detergent.
- ✓ Ensure members of staff wash their hands before and after each toothbrushing session.
- ✓ If toothbrush racks are used for transferring soiled brushes (e.g. to be rinsed by a staff member after brushing) they are cleaned daily and prior to re-inserting.

Don'ts

- ✗ Don't allow toothbrushes to touch one another. Take particular care when removing and replacing toothbrushes before and after cleaning the rack.
- ✗ Don't continue using a toothbrush rack if cracks, scratches, or rough surfaces develop. Replace them if these occur.
- ✗ Don't soak toothbrushes in any kind of cleaning product.
- ✗ Don't use disinfectant wipes or sprays for cleaning the toothbrush racks.



FAQS

Which toothpaste should be used at home?

When it comes to children under 3 years old, make sure the toothpaste has at least 1000 ppm (parts per million) of fluoride. For children older than 3, look for toothpaste with at least 1350ppm of fluoride. This information should be easy to find on the labels of the toothpaste to help make sure you're getting the right strength.

What if a child isn't complying with the sessions?

Brushing together can motivate children and get them excited to join in. Children will also be eager to show off what they've learned to their guardian or parent.

We want children to enjoy toothbrushing time, so visit our website's resources tab for some great ways to keep them engaged. We've got a fun 2-minute toothbrushing song that they can enjoy while they brush!

When do we throw away toothbrushes?

We replace toothbrushes every term, but there's also another way to tell if it's time for a change – check for bristles that are splayed out. If you see that, it's time for a fresh one.

We also recommend that children sit at a table while brushing their teeth. This way, if the toothbrush falls, it won't land on the floor. If for any reason it does hit the floor, replace it.

How should old toothbrushes be disposed of?

Sustainability and recycling is increasingly a priority for schools. If you are interested in recycling used toothbrushes from your school, TerraCycle are an external provider who can provide this service for you, free of charge.

What if there is an infection breakout?

When there's an infection breakout, it's a good idea to get new toothbrushes for everyone. It's also best to give the toothbrush racks and toothpaste tubes a good cleaning if they've been used recently.

If you need replacements, please contact your facilitator who will be more than happy to help.



Brushing together for healthy smiles

Should the children spit or swallow toothpaste?

We don't really want children to swallow their fluoride toothpaste, so reminding them not to do so is the best way to ensure this doesn't happen. After brushing, they can use a paper towel to wipe off any extra toothpaste from their mouths.

A great tip for at home is that it's best if they don't rinse their mouths right after brushing. This way, the fluoride in the toothpaste can stay on their teeth to work its magic and ensure that teeth remain strong.

Is fluoride toothpaste safe?

Don't worry, the amount of fluoride in toothpaste is completely safe for children. Think of fluoride as a superhero for teeth – it helps protect them from cavities and, if you use it as directed, it's safe for children.

How are SEN children supported?

We understand that not every child likes mint flavoured toothpaste. That's why we can provide an alternative toothpaste. This toothpaste doesn't foam up or have any taste, which is great for children with sensory sensitivities.

How long does supervised toothbrushing take?

Each session should wrap up in as little as 5 minutes. It's super easy to fit into your child's day without causing much interruption.

What time of day should the children brush their teeth?

While it's not usually recommended to brush right after eating or drinking, schools can still make time for toothbrushing as part of their routine.

It's still important though, for parents and guardians, to ensure that children brush at home too. Evening brushing is very important as is brushing in the morning before school.



Brushing together for healthy smiles

Quality Assurance Checklist

Performance is monitored annually by setting staff and Big Brush Club’s Project Facilitators. We recommend for setting staff to carry out the below checklist more frequently (e.g. once every term) to ensure guidelines are being followed.

	Achieved	Intervention Required	Programme Suspended
Organisation At Home Dental			
There is a designated programme lead who is responsible for the scheme within the setting.			
A model agreement outlining the responsibilities of partners has been completed and signed by all partners.			
Support and training are available for staff to deliver the programme, including infection prevention and control procedures. Training is recorded and monitored.			
Permission/consent is sought from parents or carers for their children to take part in the scheme and records are maintained.			
Quality assurance assessments are carried out by staff each term and by the provider team annually and documented using a quality assurance checklist. Monitoring and observation of toothbrush session. Following correct steps in toolkit.			
There is access to a named dental professional for advice if needed.			



Effective Preventative Practice

Fluoride toothpaste containing 1,350 to 1,500ppm fluoride is used in the toothbrushing programme.

Correct amount of toothpaste is used:

- Children under three years of age have a smear of paste applied to their brush.
- Children over three have a pea-sized amount of paste applied to their brush.

Children are supervised by an adult during brushing.

Children are discouraged from swallowing toothpaste during or after brushing their teeth.

After brushing, children spit out residual toothpaste and don't rinse.

Toothbrushes are replaced termly or once the bristles become splayed, or if they fall on the floor.

Infection Prevention and Control

Supervisors wash their hands before and after the toothbrushing session and cover any cuts, abrasions or breaks in their skin with a waterproof dressing before commencing a toothbrushing session.

Toothbrushes are individually identifiable for each child.

Where toothpaste is shared a supervisor dispenses it onto a clean surface such as a paper towel.

Toothbrushes are stored in appropriate storage systems or ventilated holders that enable brushes to stand in the upright position and ensure that toothbrushes do not contact each other to avoid contamination.



Storage systems display symbols corresponding with those on the toothbrushes to allow individual identification.			
Storage systems are stored within a designated toothbrush storage trolley or in a clean, dry cupboard.			
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 household detergent.			
Storage systems are regularly checked for cracks, scratches or rough surfaces and replaced if required.			
Toothbrushes should not be washed together in the sink.			
Toothbrushes that fall on the floor are discarded.			



RE: NHS Supervised Tooth Brushing Programme

Dear Parent / Guardian,

Good news! Your setting has been enrolled to provide daily supervised toothbrushing for children. This NHS scheme is brought to us by Big Brush Club and aims to help tackle tooth decay.

Your child will be brushing their teeth each day in the classroom, but they should still brush their teeth twice a day at home too!

Children will be supervised during the brushing sessions every day and will be under the guidance of trained 'Oral Health Champions'. Each child will receive their own toothbrush, which will be easily identifiable and will be stored in a safe storage system.

Allergies: Please ensure you let the nursery or school know of any allergies or health issues your child may have which could mean they are unable to take part in the scheme.

Consent: to consent for your child to take part in the scheme, please fill in the attached form and return this to your child's setting / teacher.

Parent Survey: Please complete this very short [survey](#) so that we can understand your child's toothbrushing habits at home. The survey is anonymous, so no personal information is collected.

It is important children continue to brush their teeth at home, with a fluoride toothpaste. To support this, we are sending children home with their own pack which includes a toothbrush, toothpaste and information leaflet. We would greatly appreciate your support to encourage your children with their brushing in a positive way.

Developmentally, this is such an important age and we can really make a difference to children's long term oral health by committing to this simple and effective programme. Tooth decay is the most common disease in children and an average of 3 days of school per year are missed due to dental problems causing parents and carers to have time off work for appointments. This is easily preventable through the use of fluoride toothpaste and regular brushing. Visit our website (www.bigbrushclub.co.uk) to learn more and view videos and apps that are useful in engaging your children and timing their brushing for 2 minutes.

If you wish to learn more about the programme or how to improve your child's oral health, visit www.bigbrushclub.co.uk or email info@bigbrushclub.co.uk.

Happy toothbrushing!

Yours Sincerely,



Justin Marney
Director, At Home Dental



Consent Form

Please complete this form to ensure your child is included in the scheme and return to the school / nursery / class teacher.

- Yes, I give permission for my child to be a part of the daily toothbrushing programme.
- No, I do not want my child to be included in the daily toothbrushing programme.
- I give my consent for photographs of my child to be used by Big Brush Club to promote the Supervised Toothbrushing scheme.

Child's name: _____

Parent's name: _____

Parent's signature: _____

Date: _____

You do not need to answer this question, but if you have chosen **not** to participate in the scheme it would be helpful if you could please let us know why you would prefer that your child does not participate. This will help us to continue to improve the service that we provide.



NHS Supervised Toothbrushing Programme

Dear Parent / Guardian,

Your child has been participating in the Big Brush Club's Supervised Toothbrushing Programme and we want to thank you for supporting this at home.

If you haven't already completed our parent survey, please fill it out here:

www.bigbrushclub.co.uk/parent-survey.

With the holidays fast approaching, you will find below some tips to help you support the whole family with brushing at home.

Tips for toothbrushing at home

Supervise children - Children under the age of 7 should be supervised when brushing their teeth, using a pea size amount of fluoride toothpaste and brush for 2 minutes twice a day.

Frequency of sugar - It is the frequency of sugar consumption that contributes towards tooth decay. Keep sugary snacks to mealtimes.

Website resources - Here is a link to our website where you will find healthy snack advice, resources, links to 2-minute timers and more: www.bigbrushclub.co.uk

Reward chart - Here is a downloadable reward chart to remind children to brush twice daily at home: www.bigbrushclub.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Reward-Chart-school-holidays.pdf.

If you wish to discuss the scheme further or would like to know more about how to improve your child's oral hygiene, your Big Brush Club Facilitator can answer all your questions. Please get in touch via info@bigbrushclub.co.uk.

Thank you for being part of Big Brush Club.

Yours sincerely,



Justin Marney
Managing Director
At Home Dental



Reward Chart



our weekly toothbrushing

class: _____

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday

Remember to brush at home each day and over the weekend too!

Brushing together for healthy smiles

www.bigbrushclub.co.uk info@bigbrushclub.co.uk

The reward chart features five empty circles for tracking toothbrushing from Monday to Friday. Below the circles are three cartoon characters: a badger, a fox, and a rabbit, all wearing 'Big Brush Club' t-shirts. A speech bubble from the rabbit character contains the reminder text. The chart is framed in a teal border with a pink banner at the bottom.

