

Brushing Teeth

Are you feeling like it's ready to pass the baton (toothbrush) to your child to take on bigger personal responsibilities? Is your child showing teeth-brushing readiness by holding the toothbrush during her morning and evening routines? Follow these tactics to encourage your child's autonomy and responsibility.

Play copycat. She has gone through the routine of having her teeth brushed at least twice a day. She knows that the toothbrush needs to be wet, toothpaste needs to be applied onto the head of the brush, and she knows to spit into the sink after her teeth is thoroughly brushed. It's always good to continue to model this routine so that she knows how long she needs to brush her teeth for.

Make this an enjoyable experience! Have your child pick out her favorite toothbrush at the store and toothpaste so that she has some responsibility in picking out the flavor. Children at this age do not need toothpaste; if your child does not like the texture or flavor, you can **skip the toothpaste** until the routine becomes a habit.

Encourage and praise any attempt when she brushes her teeth. Practice makes perfect! If she is not brushing her teeth well enough, take turns; have your child brush her teeth in the morning while you target the more thorough brushing in the evening.

Some children like music. **Incorporate music** into this routine and play short songs; when the song is over, brushing is done. When brushing teeth becomes a part of your child's everyday routine, increase the duration of the song up to two minutes.

Read books or social stories about brushing teeth. Have your child brush her stuffed animals' teeth throughout the day so that she gets used to the idea and works out her feelings about it.

