

# EMPOWER

## Arizona Tooth Brushing Manual

Fostering Healthy Smiles in the Child Care Setting  
for Ages 3 and Older

### Empower Standard 7: Oral Health





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## Empower Standards











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**Healthy Baby Teeth and a Healthy Smile Help a Child Develop Good Self-Esteem!**



# EMPOWER

## 10 Ways to Empower Children to Live Healthy Lives

-  **Standard 1:** Provide at least 60 minutes of daily physical activity (teacher-led and free play) and do not allow more than 60 minutes of sedentary activity at a time, or more than three hours of screen time per week.
-  **Standard 2:** Practice “sun safety.”
-  **Standard 3:** Provide a breastfeeding-friendly environment.
-  **Standard 4:** Determine whether site is eligible for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and participate if eligible.
-  **Standard 5:** Limit serving fruit juice to no more than two times per week.
-  **Standard 6:** Serve meals family style and do not use food as a reward.
-  **Standard 7:** Provide monthly oral healthcare education or implement a toothbrushing program.
-  **Standard 8:** Ensure that staff members receive three hours of training annually on Empower topics.
-  **Standard 9:** Make Arizona Smokers’ Helpline (ASHLine) education materials available at all times.
-  **Standard 10:** Maintain a smoke-free campus.

*Empower child care facilities will develop and implement a written policy for each standard that meets the needs of all children served.*

*Policies should be effective no later than July 1, 2013.*

Visit us at <http://www.theempowerpack.org>



rev. 11-13

# STANDARD 7 ORAL HEALTH

**Provide monthly oral healthcare education or implement a tooth brushing program.**

## **Part One: Empower and Oral Health**

### *Why The Empower Oral Health Standard Is Important*

- ★ Tooth decay starts early, progresses quickly, and can be very painful.
- ★ Thirty-seven (**37%**) percent of Arizona children **ages 2-4** have tooth decay in their baby teeth
- ★ Tooth decay can cause health problems and **can affect learning, speech, and eating.**
- ★ Children **at increased risk** for tooth decay are those from **low-income families** and those with **special health care needs** (those at risk for or have a chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition and also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally).
- ★ **Teachers/child care providers are a valuable source of support** when it comes to young children's oral health.
- ★ **Tooth brushing** plays an important role in the prevention of tooth decay. For this reason, tooth brushing has become an **important daily activity in many preschool and child care settings** throughout the nation.

The purpose of a tooth brushing program is to **promote good oral health practices** so the children in your care can **develop an early awareness of the importance of a healthy mouth** and help **promote a lifelong habit of daily tooth brushing.**

### **This resource will help teachers/child care providers to:**

- ★ Understand the importance of baby teeth
- ★ Understand the problem of tooth decay in children
- ★ Understand the causes of tooth decay and how best to prevent it.
- ★ Learn strategies to effectively implement a tooth brushing program in a child care setting.

**For children 2 and under, it is recommended that families brush the child's teeth twice a day and visit the dentist by one year of age.** The dentist can recommend appropriate oral hygiene care and the adequate use of fluoridated toothpaste.

# Tooth Decay is Almost Entirely Preventable!

While the Empower Program encourages a tooth brushing program, we realize it may not be feasible for everyone. However, Standard 7 of the Empower Program gives facilities the option of implementing a tooth brushing program OR introducing oral health education in the classroom through teacher-led and age-appropriate activities, while at the same time educating parents. Please check out resources for teachers and families at the Empower website: [www.theempowerpack.org](http://www.theempowerpack.org)

## The Importance of Healthy “Baby” (Primary) Teeth

### Baby Teeth Are Needed For:

- ★ Chewing food well for good nutrition;
- ★ Speech development;
- ★ Development of the jaw bones and muscles of the face;
- ★ Holding space for and guiding adult teeth into proper position, which happens until the child is around 12 years of age; and
- ★ Good self-esteem.

### Tooth Decay in Baby Teeth Can Cause:

- ★ Pain and infection that, in rare cases, can be fatal;
- ★ An increase in the amount of tooth decay in adult teeth;
- ★ Failure to thrive;
- ★ Impaired speech development and absence from and inability to concentrate in school;
- ★ Reduced self-esteem;
- ★ Decreased school performance;
- ★ Poor social relationships and less success later in life.

## How Does Tooth Decay Develop

### Tooth Decay

- ★ **Is an active process** that causes holes or cavities in the teeth resulting from interactions between **TOOTH + BACTERIA + SUGAR + TIME = TOOTH DECAY**
- ★ **Is an infectious disease**, meaning the bacteria (germs) that cause tooth decay can be transmitted (passed) from person to person.

### Tooth Decay Bacteria

- ★ **Are not present at birth.**
- ★ **Are transmitted (passed) to baby** usually by the age of three.
- ★ Are transmitted from **mother or ANYONE** who regularly cares for a baby and **has or had TOOTH DECAY.**

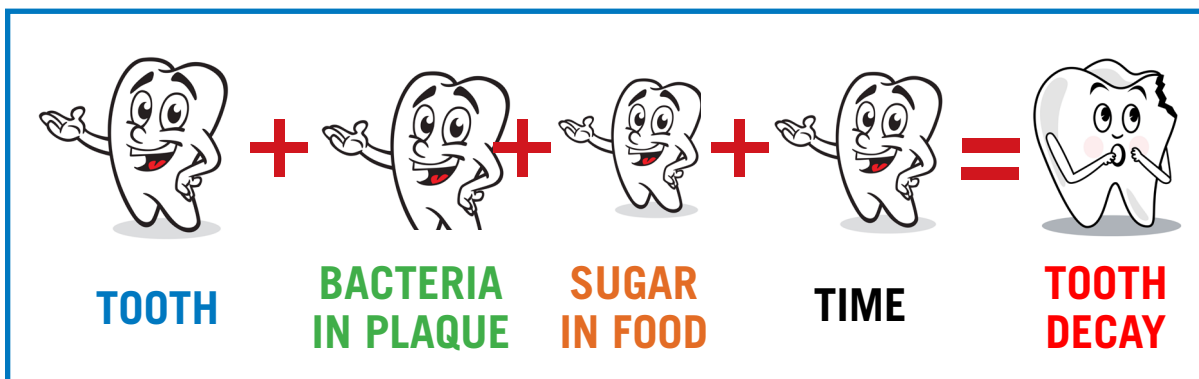
## Dental Plaque

- ★ **Is a soft, yellow-white, sticky film of bacteria (germs) + saliva + food residuals** found on teeth and gums that form on teeth every day. Though you may not be able to see dental plaque, you can feel it as a fuzzy layer on your teeth.
- ★ **Uses sugar from the foods we eat** to form acids. If dental plaque is not removed daily through brushing, the repeated acid attacks can cause tooth decay and irritate the gums.
- ★ **Daily brushing** removes the plaque and helps keep teeth and gums healthy.

There are several causes of tooth decay among American children. The combination of bacteria and the frequent consumption of foods such as sugar-coated cereal, cake, cookies, and any sticky sweets contribute to the risk for tooth decay.

The following sketch shows the process that teeth follow in developing tooth decay.

## The Recipe for Tooth Decay Formation



**A Balanced Healthy Diet is the Building Block of Healthy Teeth in a Healthy Body!**

**Baby teeth have a thinner layer of the outer surface, or enamel, compared to adult teeth and that is why tooth decay happens much faster in young children.**

# What Does Tooth Decay Look Like?

## Early Tooth Decay



- ★ The first indications of tooth decay may include **white and chalky spots on the teeth**, often near the gum line. At this stage, the tooth decay process can be stopped if:
  - ★ Minerals like **fluoride** in drinking water and toothpaste are **used on a regular basis**; and
  - ★ **High-carbohydrate foods and sugary drinks are limited** in the child's diet.

## Moderate Tooth Decay



- ★ **If early tooth decay is not addressed** through brushing, fluoride exposure and diet changes, it **advances to eventually form a hole or cavity** in the tooth. Once the tooth has a cavity or "hole," the child must be treated by a dentist.

## Advanced or Severe Tooth Decay



If tooth decay is not treated (indicated by the dark tooth color), the **resulting infection** may spread to the nerves and blood vessels of the tooth.

- ★ The decayed tooth can cause **severe pain** and the infection **can spread** to other parts of the body.
- ★ **This severe infection must be treated immediately.**



## Prevention of Tooth Decay

**Fortunately, tooth decay is almost entirely preventable.** In the child care setting, you can help prevent tooth decay by implementing a tooth brushing program to increase children's awareness of the importance of tooth brushing and to form early good oral health habits.

### **Two good reasons why tooth brushing is important:**

1. Regular daily tooth brushing with appropriate fluoride toothpaste is highly effective in preventing tooth decay
2. Good oral hygiene practices should be established early in a child's life and become an integral part of normal daily hygiene.

While a tooth brushing program is optional, it provides a valuable tool for reinforcing good oral hygiene. Just as children learn the importance of washing their hands before eating, they will learn that brushing their teeth after eating and before going to bed are healthy habits.



## Part Two: Tooth Brushing Program Implementation

The following program is targeted to children ages 3-5.

While this routine is provided as a guide, your facility may need to modify it slightly to suit your environment.

### Before starting the program

It will be important for the child care facility to consider all policies and practices that either promote or prevent good oral health. It is also recommended that child care staff be provided with training on how to run the program.

### Steps to implementing the program:

1. Informing families about the tooth brushing program;
2. Organization of the tooth brushing activity and staff supervision;
3. Sanitation concerns: safe handling of toothbrushes and toothpaste;
4. Tooth brushing instructions;
5. Managing and storing supplies; and
6. Adaptations for children with special health care needs.

### Informing Families About Your Tooth Brushing Program

**Families are a very important part of establishing a tooth brushing program in your facility.**

In particular, their implementation of home oral care is an essential start for good oral health habits. They can ensure that children are assisted in brushing their teeth using the correct techniques at home.

This manual provides resources and suggested activities to **engage and inform families** from the beginning of your tooth brushing program. The first step is to inform families and obtain appropriate **parental consent**. Sample letter and consent forms are included below.

**Families** are more likely to become active supporters of the tooth brushing program if they are **given a role**. There are many opportunities for this in the program – from developing ideas for ways to incorporate Empower policies into your facility, to taking part in the various oral health activities. Providing families with accessible information about healthy food choices and effective oral hygiene will help them to encourage their children to adopt healthy behaviors.

### Sample Suggestions for Family Involvement

- ★ You could have an **information night and/or send home information** about why tooth brushing is so important in preventing tooth decay. Make sure your staff are also well-informed and are equipped to discuss with families.
- ★ You may want to **invite a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and/or dental professional** to talk to staff about oral health and appropriate tooth brushing.
- ★ **Face-to-face reminders and updates** help keep families informed and can be effectively used to communicate about the tooth brushing program.

# Sample Parent Permission Form

## Dear Parent:

[name of facility] is introducing a new oral health program to promote strong healthy teeth among children at the facility. As you know, healthy teeth are an important part of a child's good self-esteem. We want to make sure all of our children can smile with confidence.

As a part of our program, we will be introducing daily tooth brushing. This means children in our care will brush their teeth at least once during the day, probably after lunch .

We hope the combination of tooth brushing in our facility and at home with you will help your child establish positive tooth brushing routines.

Starting [date], each child will need:

**[Insert a list of items that suit your facility's tooth brushing program (e.g. toothbrush, cup, toothpaste).**

### Your child can participate in the program if:

1. He/she is 3 years of age or older AND
2. He/she attends child care for more than 4 hours in a day OR
3. He/she has a meal while in child care.

### How does this program work?

- Children will brush their own teeth once a day under supervision of the child care staff.
- Children will use toothpaste with fluoride, accepted by the American Dental Association, provided by you or the child care facility.
- This program follows the recommendations set forth by the Arizona Department of Health Services, Empower Program.
- This program is great! It will help your child learn about good oral health, develop fine motor skills, and prevent tooth decay.

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Caregiver's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

# Organization of the Tooth Brushing Activity and Staff Supervision

## Recommended Supplies

- ★ One small soft toothbrush for each child – clearly labeled with the child’s name and date;
- ★ ADA-accepted fluoride toothpaste;
- ★ Disposable cups and paper plates and/or wax paper;
- ★ Toothbrush labels or markers, toothbrush holder and tooth brushing model.

## Cleaning Equipment

- ★ Detergent and gloves for cleaning sinks after daily brushing;
- ★ Paper towels for wiping the sinks after cleaning;
- ★ Soap for hand washing;
- ★ Marking pens for labeling each child’s equipment.

## Environment

There must be:

- ★ an area to store toothbrushes that allows for sufficient drying;
- ★ a suitable sink for brushing (not a bubbler trough or drinking fountain).  
Please follow the Arizona Child Care Rules and Regulations regarding the proper use of sinks for consumption of water.

## What Time of the Day for Tooth Brushing

- ★ Brushing at child care should take place once daily, at a time that fits into the center’s schedule. For consistency, brush at about the same time each day.
- ★ Brushing after the midday meal or before sleeping are the best times to brush. As this is a busy time for staff, tooth brushing should be scheduled to be efficient for your child care facility.

## Where to Brush

- ★ Please follow Arizona Child Care Rules and Regulations regarding the proper use of sinks for consumption of water.

## Selection of Toothpaste

It is important to know if a child has any possible allergies to ingredients or additives in toothpaste. Generally, a mild mint flavor is advised because using fruity flavors may encourage children to eat the toothpaste.

For products used with children, please follow the Arizona Child Care Rules and Regulations.



When choosing a brand of toothpaste, an important thing to look for is the American Dental Association (ADA) Seal of Acceptance.



## Clean, Safe Ways to Dispense Toothpaste

To prevent cross-contamination, the toothpaste should **NOT** be applied directly to the toothbrush; it can spread germs.

- ★ Use no more than a small pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste for each child.
- ★ **ALWAYS** keep the fluoride toothpaste out of the children's reach and adults/staff should **always** dispense it.

If toothpaste is provided by families, the child should have a label on the toothpaste tube. If toothpaste from a single tube is shared among children, it should be dispensed onto a clean piece of wax paper, paper cup, or paper plate for each child, rather than directly onto the toothbrush.



### Wax Paper, Paper Plate or Paper Cup:

1. To prevent cross-contamination, you can dispense a pea-sized amount of toothpaste for each child onto a large piece of wax paper, paper plate or inside the lip of a paper cup.
2. These can then be distributed and children can "scoop" up the toothpaste or an adult can help them "scoop."

### Toothpaste Safety!

**Fluoride toothpaste should always be stored away from children's reach. Only a child care worker or adult should have access to and handle the fluoride toothpaste.**

Toothpaste is intended to provide a **topical** source of fluoride (on the surface); it is **NOT** supposed to be swallowed by the child. If a child **ingests a large amount of fluoride toothpaste at one time**, call the Poison Control Center **1-800-362-0101** for information.

## Staff Involvement and Supervision

- ★ With children ages 3-5, tooth brushing can best be accomplished as a **small group** activity, with adults supervising, coaching, and modeling the appropriate technique but not actually brushing the children's teeth.
- ★ Children should **not be left unattended** or be allowed to dispense the toothpaste.
- ★ Children must be **able to rinse and spit** to prevent swallowing of too much toothpaste. For children with special health care needs, this activity should be consistent with their individualized plan.
- ★ In this recommended tooth brushing program, **ALL children will be brushing their own teeth**. For this reason, families should be advised that **additional brushings should take place daily at home**, with an adult doing the brushing for the child at least one time daily until age 7 or 8.
- ★ **Simple modifications and adaptations can be made** to help the child with special health care needs feel comfortable with group tooth brushing.
- ★ For children who might have a **strong gag reflex or swallow the toothpaste**, use half a pea-sized amount of toothpaste or a more mild toothpaste flavor.

**It can be helpful to designate specific tasks to each staff member. Some tasks may include:**

- ★ Keeping track of purchasing toothbrushes and/or toothpaste;
- ★ Making and/or purchasing toothbrush labels and storage devices;
- ★ Organizing children in groups and observing them during brushing;
- ★ Distributing toothpaste to children over ages 3-5 (get a pea-sized dab), and ensuring it is safely stored away from children after use;
- ★ Coaching children to rinse with water and spit to prevent swallowing;
- ★ Organizing children to get their brush rinsed thoroughly and into their appropriate storage space.

**Also consider...**

- ★ **Rewards**, in the way of positive verbal reinforcement.
- ★ Child-selected **toothbrush colors**.
- ★ Using **timers** for 2 minutes... egg timers or manual timing.
- ★ Making up or learning several different **tooth brushing songs** before the activity (see Empower Guidebook for examples).
- ★ A **chart with stickers** to show success in remembering the tooth brushing steps.

# Steps for an Effective Tooth Brushing Program

## Suggestions for Introducing the Program to Children Prior to Tooth Brushing

### Set the Atmosphere

- ★ Approach oral care with a positive attitude and make it fun for the children.
- ★ Use the 'tell, show, do' approach when introducing new items or steps.
- ★ Model tooth brushing by demonstrating on yourself. This is considered a highly effective method of teaching this skill.
- ★ Picture books, videos, and puppets or toys can also be used to demonstrate.
- ★ Give lots of positive feedback to reinforce good behavior.
- ★ Keep a log of what works, what doesn't, and questions.

**Session 1.** Introduce the idea of tooth brushing in class and talk about the reasons to do it. (see activities for Standard 7 in Empower Pack)

**Session 2.** Introduce the rules for the program. Each center will determine what rules are needed according to their situation. The children should understand not to share their toothbrush and not to use it for any other purpose (such as brushing their friend's or their stuffed animal's hair). Other rules may include how the toothbrushes, cups, and toothpaste will be distributed. It is a good idea to practice the distribution routine without water or toothpaste at least once or twice before implementing the program.

**Session 3.** Demonstrate tooth brushing. Do not use toothpaste for this demonstration. The ideal way to demonstrate is in small groups. An adult and a small group of children face a mirror and brush together. The adult is modeling the tooth brushing skill and the children imitate. This is more effective than demonstrating on a puppet or showing pictures. If this is not possible, sit in a circle for the demonstration, but the key is to have the adult brush so the children can watch and imitate.

**Session 4.** Practice spitting and rinsing with water to ensure they are able to spit and rinse before introducing toothpaste.

**When children are brushing their teeth, they are also practicing manual dexterity skills and hand-eye coordination.**





## **Don't Rush to Brush!**

**Step 1.** An adult should supervise tooth brushing at all times.

**Step 2.** Start by washing your hands and asking children to wash their hands and rinse their toothbrushes with tap water.

- ★ Child care staff places a small pea-size of toothpaste onto each child's tooth brush using child's individual toothpaste.
- ★ If a single tube of toothpaste is used for the classroom, toothpaste is dispensed onto a paper plate, wax paper, or into individual paper cups.

**Step 3.** Children should be encouraged to clean their teeth using the demonstrated technique and should brush for approximately two minutes (some groups have found it useful to play a song during this time).

- ★ Spit toothpaste out into the sink.
- ★ Rinse with a little tap water provided in a disposable paper cup.

**Step 4.** When the children are finished brushing, they shall:

- ★ Dispose of their cup. Cups should not be shared or used again and should be thrown away after one use.
- ★ Rinse their own toothbrush.

**Step 5.** Toothbrushes are replaced in the toothbrush holder to air dry.

**Step 6.** Be sure to clean the sink area as you would normally; there is no need for special clean-up. A solution of detergent and water may be used to wash down the sink where toothpaste has accumulated.

## These instructions will guide children to brush well in 2 minutes.



The goal is for children to strive to brush every tooth, to become aware that each tooth has a cheek side, a tongue side, and chewing surfaces, and to brush in a pattern, concentrating on each tooth as they go.

- ★ Spend at least 30 seconds on each section of the mouth (top, bottom, left, right), adding up to two minutes for the complete tooth brushing time.
- ★ Start by placing the tip of the bristles of the toothbrush towards the gum line on the top outside surface of the back teeth and gently “jiggling” it in tiny circles along every tooth, making sure you clean the area where the tooth meets the gums.
- ★ With this circular motion, slowly move forward towards the front teeth only a small group of teeth at a time until the entire arch is covered.
- ★ On inside surfaces of top front teeth, use small circular motions in gentle up and down strokes, touching every surface of each tooth with the brush.
- ★ Continue to jiggle around the front of the mouth and cover the back teeth on the opposite side.
- ★ Repeat the same brushing method on the bottom inside and outside surfaces of all teeth.
- ★ Next, place the toothbrush bristles on the chewing surfaces, hold the brush flat and use a light backward and forward motion for bottom and top teeth.

## Sanitation Concerns: Safe Handling of Toothbrushes and Toothpaste

Young children drop, share, sit on, and play games with toothbrushes if not carefully supervised. Toothbrushes can get contaminated with bacteria, saliva, and food after brushing. All precautions should be taken to ensure proper storage and handling of toothbrushes and toothpaste to prevent cross-contamination of germs.

### Measures for a Sanitary Tooth Brushing Program in a Child Care Setting

- ★ Ensure that each child has **his or her own toothbrush clearly labeled**. Do not allow children to share or borrow toothbrushes.
- ★ Children's **hands should be clean** for the brushing activity.
- ★ **Pick up** toothbrushes by their **handles only, never** from the **bristles**.
- ★ Ensure that children **rinse** their toothbrushes thoroughly with water before and after each use.
- ★ Store the toothbrushes standing in an **upright position** so they will air dry and not touch other children's. **Do not store toothbrushes in the vicinity of flushing toilets**.
- ★ Children should be supervised to prevent accidental spitting on each other's arms, hands, and toothbrushes.
- ★ Do not let the toothbrushes drip onto one another.
- ★ **Do not cover toothbrushes** with anything that could prevent them from drying between uses.
- ★ If a toothbrush has been contaminated or has been used by another child, it should be thrown away.
- ★ Make sure that toothbrushes do not become contaminated in the bathroom from toileting and handwashing activities.
- ★ The **holding racks** should be scrubbed, cleaned, and dried on a regular basis with detergent and water.
- ★ Provide children with paper cups to use for rinsing after they finish brushing. Do not allow them to share cups, and ensure that they dispose of the cups properly after a single use.
- ★ To **prevent cross-contamination of the toothpaste tube**, ensure that a pea-sized drop of fluoride toothpaste is always dispensed onto a piece of wax paper, paper plate, or individual paper cup before dispensing any onto the toothbrush.
- ★ After the tooth brushing activity, the child care provider and children should **wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water**.
- ★ Be sure to **clean the sink area** as you would normally; there is no need for special clean-up.

## Selection of Toothbrushes

- ★ The **child's toothbrush head should be small**, about 1 inch by 1/2 inch, enough to reach every tooth, especially the back ones, and should have a handle suitable for firm grasping.
- ★ The **bristles of the brush should be soft, nylon, and rounded** at the ends. Only age-appropriate manual toothbrushes should be used. Some children may benefit from adaptive toothbrushes (see page 19).
- ★ When selecting toothbrushes, it is important to keep in mind how they will be stored, since some handles can make storage more difficult.

## Replacing Children's Toothbrushes

The **old toothbrush should be thrown out** and a new one supplied when:

- ★ The toothbrush is **3-4 months old** or the bristles become splayed or worn; or
- ★ A child has been **ill with a cold, the flu, or bacterial infection**.
- ★ **If there's a doubt, please throw it out!**

## How Old is That Toothbrush?

### Three Ways to Remind You:

1. You can keep track of how old the toothbrush is by marking it with the date it was given to the child using a permanent marker.
2. On a calendar or spreadsheet, you can write down the date toothbrushes were given and then the date when the brush should be replaced, which is in about 3 months.
3. Or use an electronic calendar that automatically reminds you when brushes are due for changing.

## Storing Toothbrushes

- ★ After children finish brushing, they should rinse their toothbrushes thoroughly with water. **Do not soak** toothbrushes in disinfecting solutions or mouthwash.
- ★ Toothbrushes should be stored in an upright position, in an open area, and allowed to air dry. Keep them away from the children's reach where they will not be coughed or sneezed upon and will not drip on activity areas.
- ★ Do not cover toothbrushes or store them in closed containers. A moist environment is more favorable to bacterial growth than the open air.
- ★ Toothbrush storage systems can be purchased online.
- ★ Keep tooth brushing supplies and activities away from food preparation areas and the toilet.
- ★ Prevent toothbrushes from touching each other during handling or storage.

## Managing and Storing Supplies

Staff members should be designated who will be responsible for managing supply inventory, ordering/purchasing, storage, and distribution. Establish where supplies will be safely stored and how they will be distributed to children. Inventory of supplies will vary, depending on the number of children that attend your child care facility.

**If the tooth brushing program relies on each child's family to provide toothbrushes and/or toothpaste, the facility may choose to have extra supplies on hand for children who forget to bring them from home.**



### Toothbrush Labeling

Each child should have an age-appropriate toothbrush labeled with his or her full name and the date the toothbrush was given to the child. This can be done using a permanent marker.

**Do not allow children to share or borrow toothbrushes.**

### Ordering Toothbrushes

Suppliers of oral care products can help you determine what toothbrushes to purchase based on the number of children you care for and their ages. Toothbrushes of all sizes can be purchased in bulk so replacements are readily available.

### Toothbrush Storage Systems

Neither the Arizona Department of Health Services Office of Oral Health nor the Empower Program endorses any particular company or product; however, a list with some resources to purchase toothbrush storage, tooth brushing models, and age-appropriate toothbrushes is available in this Empower Tooth Brushing Guide.



*Used with permission from Kaplan Early Learning Company*

## Adaptations for Children with Special Health Care Needs or Those with Behavioral Problems

Here are some adaptations for toothbrushes that may enable children with fine motor skill limitations to care for their teeth themselves:

**Wooden extension:** available at drug stores (e.g. tongue blade or a 12-inch or 18-inch ruler), use adhesive and cotton at the junction and the end for support.

**Sponge rubber ball:** available at drug stores or 99 cent stores, or slide a brush into a foam rubber hair curler.

**Bicycle handlebar grip:** available at sporting goods stores, fill grip with epoxy and then insert brush handle into grip.

**An electric or battery operated toothbrush** is advised when a child can't move the toothbrush around very well in his/her mouth but can use gross movements to position the brush. The enlarged handle and vibrating brush action make an ideal aid.

**When choosing an electric or battery operated toothbrush, look for the following features:**

- ★ A cordless and rechargeable handle;
- ★ An on/off switch which starts automatically upon pressure;
- ★ A circular up and down motion of the bristles; and
- ★ Soft bristles.

**A specialty toothbrush named Collis Curve** might also be beneficial. See photo.



*Collis Curve*



## Part Three: Additional Resources

### Frequently Asked Questions About Oral Health

#### Why is good oral health important?

Tooth decay is an infectious disease and a serious problem among young children in Arizona. Disease in any part of the body affects the general health of a child or adult. This is especially true when the disease involves the teeth (tooth decay) or the gums (periodontal disease). Teeth are important for eating, speaking, chewing, nutrition, positive self-esteem, and good overall health.

#### What causes tooth decay?

Tooth decay is an active process that causes holes or cavities in the teeth resulting from interactions between **TOOTH + BACTERIA + SUGAR + TIME**. These tooth decay-causing bacteria feed on sugar and produce acid by-products that can weaken the tooth's outer surface or enamel. If the enamel is not strengthened, it will continue to break down, causing a cavity or hole. Once a cavity is formed, only a filling can restore the tooth.

#### Where do tooth decay-causing bacteria come from?

Tooth decay-causing bacteria are not present at birth. This bacteria can be passed to a baby from a mother or anyone who regularly cares for the baby. Two good examples of how bacteria are passed: tasting food from baby's spoon and licking a pacifier to clean it.

#### Does it matter if baby teeth have tooth decay?

Baby teeth are important for eating, talking and holding space for adult teeth. It is difficult for children to eat a well-balanced meal with tooth decay. Teeth start coming in when babies are about 6 - 7 months old and some of these baby teeth will not fall out until the child is about 12 years old. Untreated tooth decay can lead to pain and infection and also means that there is an increase in the tooth decay-causing bacteria. As adult teeth come in, they are at increased risk for also developing tooth decay because of the high amount of bacteria present in the mouth.

#### What can I do to prevent tooth decay?

- ★ Brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and floss daily. For 2 - 7 year olds, help them with brushing in the morning and especially at bedtime (use a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste, spit out after brushing and rinse).
- ★ Drink fluoridated water and use toothpaste with fluoride to help your teeth resist tooth decay.
- ★ Avoid feeding children sugary drinks and foods such as soda, fruit juices, sugar-coated cereals, cake, cookies, raisins and any sticky sweets between meals.
- ★ Give only water to drink at bedtime.
- ★ Visit your dentist at least twice a year for check-ups and preventive care.

- ★ Children's **first visit** to the **dentist** should happen by their **first birthday**.
- ★ Ask your dental provider about **sealants** and fluoride for your child or check if sealants or **fluoride school-based programs** are provided in the school that the child attends.

### **When should children start using fluoride toothpaste?**

**Children 3 years of age and older should use a pea-sized dab of fluoride toothpaste;** spit out in the sink and rinse with a little tap water. For children less than 3 years of age, consult with a dental care provider about his/her oral care routine.

### **Why do young children need to be assisted or supervised with tooth brushing?**

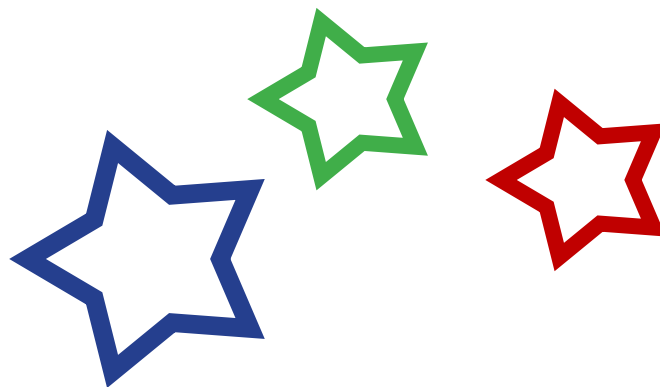
Children up to 7 or 8 years old **are still developing their fine motor skills** and are not able to brush properly. Young children also **tend to use too much and swallow toothpaste** when they are brushing. For these reasons, children need to be supervised and assisted with tooth brushing by an adult to ensure that the teeth are cleaned well, an appropriate amount of toothpaste (a pea-sized drop) is used, and that the child spits out the toothpaste rather than swallows it.

### **When should children start seeing a dental provider?**

Children should see a dental provider **by age one**. This gives the provider a chance to talk with parents about early good oral health habits for the child. Parents can start a dental routine to increase the chances that their child will be tooth decay-free.

### **Can my diet make a difference?**

**Yes! Bacteria feed on foods that are high in sugar and starch, so eating a lot of them speeds up the tooth decay process.** Frequently snacking on sugary, sticky, or starchy foods and sipping sugary drinks like soda pop or fruit juice all day increases the risk for tooth decay. Have desserts with meals and choose wholesome foods like cheese, carrots, and celery for snacks.





## Reliable Websites Related to Oral Health

- ★ American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry  
<http://www.aapd.org/>
- ★ American Academy of Pediatrics  
<http://www.aap.org/oralhealth/cme/page5.htm>
- ★ American Dental Association  
<http://www.mouthhealthy.org>
- ★ American Dental Hygienists' Association  
<http://www.adha.org/oralhealth/children.htm>
- ★ Arizona Department of Health Services, Office of Oral Health  
<http://www.azdhs.gov/phs/owch/oral-health/>
- ★ Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors  
<http://www.astdd.org/index.php?template=eccioh.html>
- ★ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<http://www.cdc.gov/OralHealth/topics/child.htm>
- ★ Empower Program  
<http://www.theempowerpack.org>
- ★ National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research  
<http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/OralHealth/OralHealthInformation/SpecialNeeds/>
- ★ National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center  
<http://www.mchoralhealth.org/>
- ★ Special Care Dentistry Association  
<http://www.scdaonline.org/>  
<https://scda.site-ym.com/?Factsheets>

## Websites to Purchase Supplies

- ★ Kaplan Early Learning Company  
<http://www.kaplanco.com>
- ★ OraLine  
[https://oroline.net/CHILD\\_CARE/Brush\\_Racks/20\\_Hole\\_Toothbrush\\_Rack](https://oroline.net/CHILD_CARE/Brush_Racks/20_Hole_Toothbrush_Rack)
- ★ Plak Smacker  
<http://www.plaksmacker.com/index.php?cPath=58&osCsid=>
- ★ ShopAnatomical for models of teeth and the mouth.  
[http://www.shopanatomical.com/Dental\\_Models\\_Anatomical\\_Model\\_Anatomy\\_Model\\_s/7.htm](http://www.shopanatomical.com/Dental_Models_Anatomical_Model_Anatomy_Model_s/7.htm)
- ★ Shopwiki.com  
<http://www.shopwiki.com//childrens-toothbrush-holder>

**Space for users of this manual to add resources that they have found useful**





Arizona Department of Health Services  
Bureau of Women's and Children's Health  
Office of Oral Health

April 2014