



## Oral Health Implementation

Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease of childhood, with more than 40% of children having caries by the time they enter kindergarten. Early childhood caries (ECC) can cause significant pain for children and can lead to oral infection, visible dental decay, destruction and loss of teeth, and damage to permanent teeth. This can impact a child's self-esteem, sleep patterns, school readiness, weight gain, and more. Child care centers can play an important role in the reduction of ECC by educating children and their parents on the importance of healthy oral hygiene.

Go NAPSACC offers best practices for improving oral health in tooth brushing, food and beverages provided to children, teacher practices during tooth brushing and child and parent education in improving oral health practices. Best practices for each topic can be found below. To view the oral health self-assessment, [click here](#).

### Tooth brushing

- Provide time for tooth brushing at least 1 time per day for [infants](#), [toddlers](#), and preschool children.
- [Brush with fluoride toothpaste](#).
- The toothbrushes available in the program are *age-appropriate, labeled for each child, replaced at least every 6 months and stored standing up and not touching each other.*

### Teacher Practices

- Teachers or staff brush teeth for children under 3 and monitor children's brushing ability and offer hands-on help as needed for children over age 3.
- Teachers and staff work to create a positive experience for children during scheduled tooth brushing by showing enthusiasm for brushing, singing, and praising children.
- Toddlers and infants are not offered bottles or sippy cups during naptime or playtime

### Education to Children and Families

- Teachers talk with children informally about the importance of oral health, as well as include planned oral health education in their classroom routines.
- The following topics are included in the planned oral health education for preschool children:
  - Importance of tooth decay
  - Plaque and tooth decay
  - How foods and beverages impact oral health
  - How fluoride and oral hygiene promote oral health
  - Brushing with fluoride toothpaste
  - Visiting the dentist
- Families are offered oral health education on the following topics:
  - Importance of oral health for young children
  - Plaque and tooth decay
  - How foods, beverages, and the use of bottles and sippy cups can impact oral health
  - How fluoride and oral hygiene habits promote oral health
  - Avoiding sharing saliva
  - Brushing with fluoride toothpaste
  - Family practice for positive, supervised tooth brushing
  - Importance of starting oral health care by 12 months
  - The fluoride level in the drinking water the program provides to children



Additional Resources

- [Oral Health Tip Sheets](#)
- [Tooth brushing](#)
- [Fluoride Posters](#)
- [Cavity Free Kids: Oral Health Curriculum](#)
- [National Maternal & Child Oral Health Resource Center](#)
- [America's Pediatric Dentists](#)