



Information for parents/carers of children with special educational needs

www.bspd.co.uk

Supervised
toothbrushing



British Society of
Paediatric Dentistry

Introduction

Every child should be able to enjoy good oral health, yet in some parts of the country half of children start school with tooth decay. Poor oral health can affect a child's ability to eat, smile and socialise and causes pain and infection with days missed from school. Supervised toothbrushing programmes have been shown to keep children's teeth healthy and help them to develop good brushing skills at home.

Why am I getting this leaflet?

You child's school, nursery or setting has agreed to take part in supervised toothbrushing. As a parent/carer of a child with special educational needs (SEN), we want to support you and tell you more about supervised toothbrushing and what it means for you and your child. This leaflet has been written to support any child with SEN, including autistic children and those with additional sensory needs.

What is involved in supervised toothbrushing?

Supervised toothbrushing means that children brush their teeth daily with fluoride toothpaste in a school, nursery or early years setting. The setting staff do not physically brush children's teeth, but encourage the children to take part as a group activity. It is intended to be a child-led activity and one that they find enjoyable. Here is a good video showing supervised toothbrushing in action:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZR9yDoriNp4



My child struggles to brush their teeth at home, how can we help them to take part?

Taking part is voluntary, but many parents tell us that having their child brushing at school or nursery has also made it easier to brush their child's teeth at home. We know that some children with SEN may need a bit more time before they are happy to take part and this is absolutely fine! Every child should be encouraged to join in at their own pace so that they feel comfortable to brush their teeth.

There are lots of ways that children with additional sensory needs can be helped to take part in supervised toothbrushing. For example, if your child prefers to use a particular fluoride toothpaste such as a flavour-free or non-foaming paste then you could ask your child's setting if your child could bring their own toothpaste as a reasonable adjustment. They might also prefer to watch, rather than join in at first, and this is of course fine.



How can I help my child to take care of their teeth at home?

Supervised toothbrushing is designed to be an additional time of toothbrushing. It is not designed to replace toothbrushing at home. There are lots of good resources you might find helpful such as the toothPASTE website, www.autismtoothcare.com, and information from the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry, [BSPD Guidance for Parents and Carers of Autistic CYP June 2025.pdf](#). Many schemes will also offer home brushing packs containing toothbrushes and paste for you to use at home and over the holiday period.



I'm really struggling to help my child brush their teeth at home, have you got any tips?

The Mini Mouth Care Matters team have produced this really helpful leaflet with lots of practical tips:

[MMCM Resistance Poster](#)

Who can I speak to if I have any questions?

Your child's teacher, SEN lead or key worker is the first person to speak to if you have any questions about your child taking part in supervised toothbrushing. They will also be best placed to support any wider accommodations that may help your child.

Can we use a social story to help my child?

Yes, of course! Social stories and visual planners can be really helpful for some autistic children. Here is one you might be able to adapt with your child's setting to meet your child's needs.

My Brushing Routine



Pick up your brush and collect your toothpaste



Brush your teeth well for 2 minutes



Spit out only and rinse your brush under the tap



Put your brush back and you are all finished!

We hope that this information helps you and your child to join the supervised toothbrushing programme.



For further information,
please visit our website:
www.bspd.co.uk

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