

WHEN SHOULD MY CHILD BRUSH THEIR OWN TEETH?



A GUIDE FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN



Dentistry
for Children and Adolescents
PEDIATRIC SPECIALISTS



There is much speculation as to when your child should start brushing his or her own teeth. While they might seem capable of doing so, most children do not develop the motor skills necessary to properly brush until they are at least six years old.

You might have heard stories of someone's child brushing his or her own teeth at age 3 or 4, and they might be half-right. They might be going through the motions, but the chances they are doing a good enough job to completely clean their teeth and gums are pretty slim.



It's great to get them involved.

As soon as your child is able to hold a toothbrush, it is a great idea to get them involved in the process. The earlier you get them to take interest in a brushing routine, the better.

Starting a healthy oral hygiene routine early is the best way to get your child accustomed to the importance of dental health. The earlier you begin a routine, the more likely your child is to adapt, and maintain a healthy brushing and flossing regimen.

Don't let them take the wheel just yet.

While it is great to get your child involved in the process, you should still be going over their work. They might seem like they are doing a good job, but in reality, most toddlers lack the ability and hand-eye coordination to get to all of the surfaces of their teeth.

It is still important to get them to brush their own teeth in some capacity. Otherwise, how will they learn?! Encourage them to practice and do it themselves. Then, tell them you want to see how great they did and clean any spots they might have missed.



How can I tell if they are doing a good job?

As your child's dexterity improves, so will their brushing skills. The best thing you can do as a parent, is to closely inspect his or her teeth after each brushing.

If you prefer visual proof, you can use plaque disclosing tablets or solution to track their work. The tablets work by changing the color of the plaque on your child's tooth which will reveal any areas missed from their brush work.

Once they are able to consistently clear the color off of all teeth, then they are probably ready to assume brushing duties.



So when do I know it's time for them to take over?

The truth is, there is no set time or age for a child to do all of the brushing on their own. All children develop differently, so each case will be unique.

As a parent, you know your child best. Your parental instinct, paired with an eagle eye, will be the best judge of whether or not your child is ready to take responsibility for his or her own teeth.

A good litmus test to compare your child's readiness for brushing independence is his or her ability to tie their own shoes. The motor skills needed to tie their shoes are often compared to the abilities needed to thoroughly and properly clean their teeth.

Your child could be ready to take over tooth brushing as early as the age of six, and as late as age nine. Every child will develop differently so there is no cause for alarm if he or she isn't completely getting the hang of it on their sixth birthday.

The best thing you can do is to keep working with them and be encouraging as they continue to develop their brushing habits and methods.





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Have more questions?



If you would like to schedule an appointment for your child, or have any other questions regarding your child's dental health, don't hesitate to give us a call!

Ensure your child is receiving the best dental care by selecting the right provider for your family's needs. At Dentistry for Children and Adolescents, we deliver oral health care that is comprehensive, accessible and family-centered for children and adolescents.

To learn more about us and the services we can provide your family, call either one of our locations:

Creve Coeur, MO at 314-567-1122

St. Charles, MO at 636-946-5225



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