

Beating Brushing Battles



Adults need to be involved...

in fact, need to help until the child is about 8 years old.

- 🪄 **Build tooth brushing into the daily routine - after breakfast and at bedtime.**
- 🪄 **Plan something for after the brushing to keep the child moving.**
 - “When you brush then we will.....”
- 🪄 **Singing a toothbrush song - especially with your mouth full - is a great distraction.**
- 🪄 **Make it fun!**
 - Go on a food hunt: “Didn’t you eat spaghetti? I can’t find it!”
 - Hunt for silly things: “There is an elephant in there!”
 - Spit it out: “Listen to the elephant go down the drain!” (make noises!)
- 🪄 **Plan ahead for distractions! Put something in the sink to spit on or rinse down:**
 - with watercolor marker draw a picture, write child’s name, numbers, letters...
 - draw dots of fairy dust from the tooth fairy!
- 🪄 **Teach a stuffed animal/baby how to brush.**
- 🪄 **Give the child a sense of control: Offer a choice:**
 - “Should I start on the top or bottom teeth?” “Do you want the red or pink brush today?”
- 🪄 **Call on an expert:**
 - Read books about tooth care, dentists, etc.
 - Visit the dentist and let the authority speak!
- 🪄 **Do NOT use the dentist as a threat!**
 - “Find” notes from the tooth fairy praising the child’s tooth care.
- 🪄 **Avoid “punishments” and keep your sense of humor!**
- 🪄 **Try togetherness:**
 - Let child go first, then you finish up.
 - Offer a choice as to who goes first.
 - Let child watch you brush your teeth—kids learn by imitating.
 - Let child brush your teeth while you brush his (this takes some coordination!)
- 🪄 **Talk, talk, talk while you brush.**
 - Describe/remember his/her day from beginning to end.
 - Kids love to be the center of attention.
- 🪄 **If you are into a battle, do a quick and firm job this time...then plan ahead for a different method next time.**
- 🪄 **Having a trick up your sleeve (or in your bathroom) usually takes *less* time than a fight!**

Adapted from *Cavity Free Kids*, Washington Dental Service Foundation