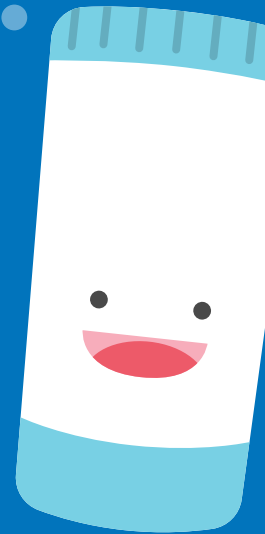




12 Fun Activities

TO GET KIDS TO BRUSH THEIR TEETH

We know getting kids to brush their teeth can be a struggle. From screaming and temper tantrums to using every excuse in their repertoire, little ones will often go to great lengths to avoid putting in the effort to keep their pearly whites clean. Most of the time, it's because it feels like a chore and, let's face it, no one *really* wants to do chores. Here at Innovative Pediatric Dentistry, we see frustrated parents every day and we're here to tell you, it doesn't have to be this way. Over the years, we've picked up a lot of tips and tricks for encouraging even the most reluctant kids to maintain healthy, beautiful smiles. It all boils down to making oral hygiene enjoyable and we're sharing our no-fail ways to do just that and end the power struggle. Here's our guide to fun activities to get kids to brush their teeth. Let's do this!



#1: GO ON AN ORAL HYGIENE SHOPPING TRIP

When your baby sprouts their first tooth, it's time to start brushing twice a day. At this stage, you'll be doing the brushing for them. Use a child-sized toothbrush and a tiny smear of fluoride toothpaste, no bigger than a grain of rice, up until they're three-years-old, at which point you can increase the toothpaste to a pea-sized amount. When any two teeth are touching, you can also add flossing once a day to the regimen. When they reach toddlerhood, we've found making the experience as kid-friendly as possible is extremely helpful for getting them to cooperate. It all starts with the right supplies. For your first activity, go shopping together!

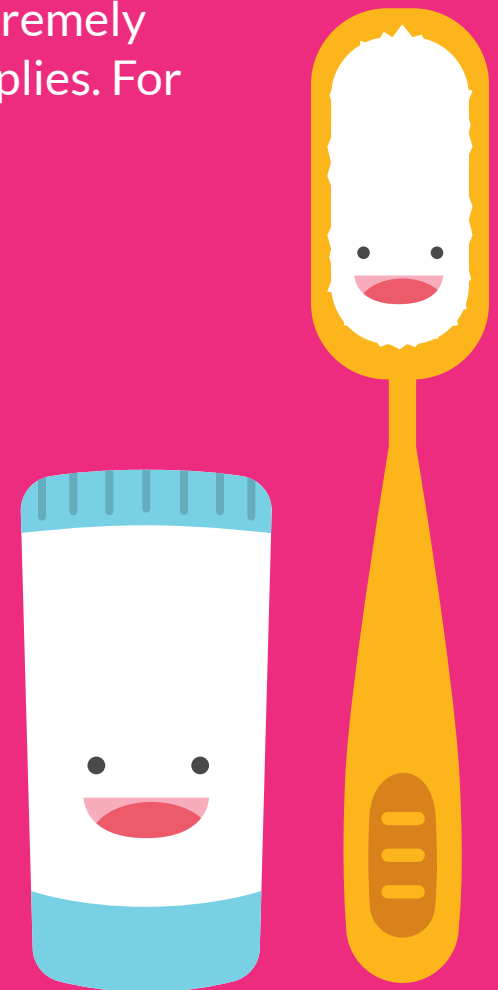
LET THEM PICK OUT AN AWESOME TOOTHBRUSH

Is your kid a fan of *Blaze and the Monster Machines* or *Dora the Explorer*? You can find these characters emblazoned on a toothbrush. Take them to the store with you and let them choose a fun, colorful, child-sized toothbrush. If they really dig in their heels at brushing time, sometimes, a child's electric toothbrush adds a novelty factor.

AND REALLY TASTY TOOTHPASTE

While the idea of brushing your teeth with grape-flavored toothpaste might make you cringe, that zesty mint you use on your own teeth probably isn't a kid's idea of delicious. Go for a kid-approved toothpaste instead. Two of our top picks:

- Tom's of Maine Natural Kid's Toothpaste in Silly Strawberry
- The Natural Dentist Cavity Zapper for Kids in Not Yucky Grape



#2: THE INNOVATIVE PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY SUPER AMAZING TEETH BRUSHING CHART!



Positive reinforcement is a tried and true way to get kids to brush their teeth (or do chores or homework for that matter). We're big fans of sticker charts at Innovative Pediatric Dentistry. For one, kids love stickers! Plus, it holds them accountable and visually shows them their progress, so they'll feel proud. We've created this printable brushing chart. Have your little one place a sticker in the designated area each time they brush and floss. After they have, say, two successful weeks, give them a prize. Obviously, as pediatric dentists, we have to caution against sugary treats as rewards. Instead, let them pick the movie for family night, go on an adventure somewhere, do their favorite hobby with them...you get the idea.

I BRUSHED MY TEETH!

MORNING

NIGHT

MONDAY



TUESDAY



WEDNESDAY



THURSDAY



FRIDAY



SATURDAY



SUNDAY



#3: ADD SOME TUNES

Your child should brush their teeth for two minutes every brushing session. In fact, reaching the two minute mark is more important than the type of toothpaste or toothbrush you use when it comes to keeping teeth squeaky clean. But, we know, two minutes can seem like a lifetime for kids and it can get a little boring. Make it fun by incorporating music into your routine. Put on a song that's around two minutes long, dance around and have them brush until it ends. Toothbrushes make amazing pretend microphones to sing into, so don't worry if a song runs a little over. Use the extra seconds to rock out together.

HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS, ALL OF WHICH ARE AVAILABLE ON YOUTUBE, THAT COME IN AROUND TWO MINUTES:

- "1234" – Feist (Sesame Street Version)
- "We Gotta be Clean" – Guster
- "Brush Your Teeth to This Song" – Andrew Huang – CBC Kids
- "You've Got a Friend in Me" – Randy Newman
- "Mercedes Benz" – Janis Joplin (for the classic rock kiddos)
- "Kids Just Love to Brush Their Teeth" – Sesame Street
- "We're Going to be Friends" – The White Stripes or the Jack Johnson Cover
- "This is the Way We Brush Our Teeth" – Little Baby Bum



#4: MAKE IT A BRUSHING PARTY

Show your child how much you LOVE to brush your teeth. If they see that you're into it, they'll be more likely to accept it. Make it an event every day. Join them and brush too, sing some songs, dance, play, come up with a cheer you can do ("Yay! Woo! The sugar bugs have nothing on you!") and really get them excited. Even better? Have the whole family brush their teeth at the same time. It's probably not possible at every brushing session but when you can, make it a brushing party.

Pro tip: Never underestimate a kid's competitive spirit or love of games. Adding these activities to your brushing party will take the excitement up a notch:

#5: MUSICAL BRUSHING

When the music starts, the brushing starts. When the music stops, the brushing stops. Keep it going until they've brushed for two whole minutes.



#6: WHO HAS THE CLEANEST TEETH?

This works best if you have at least three people in your household. One person is the judge (preferably a parent) and the two others are the contestants. Put on a timer for two minutes and see who can brush their teeth the best before it dings. The person with the shiniest chompers wins!

#7: COPYCAT

Brush together and every thirty seconds or so take turns making a funny face in the mirror that the other brusher has to imitate. Yeah, you're going to drool and some toothpaste might escape your mouth but your kiddo will have a blast.

#8: GET IN COSTUME

Tell your child why brushing and flossing are so important and make up a fantastical tale about it. Perhaps, Floss Boy or the Toothbrush Girl have to defeat the sugar bugs before the clock strikes 8 pm to save the world! Let them get into the role by having a cape nearby to put on when it's time to tackle plaque and defeat the mouth monsters.

#9: THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

For better or worse, our phones and tablets are here to stay. Why not harness that technology for a healthier smile? There are some really cool apps out there that make brushing tons of fun.



BRUSH DJ

[Android](#) and [iOS](#)

Brush DJ takes music from your own device and plays it for two minutes, so you can create a playlist of your child's favorite songs. It will also send reminders to brush twice a day, floss and visit the dentist.



HEROES OF HYGIENE

[iOS](#) and [Android](#)

Heroes of Hygiene keeps kids entertained and engaged throughout their two-minute brushing sessions. They pick a superhero character like Enamel Girl or Captain Molar who guides them through the proper brushing technique and keeps them motivated.



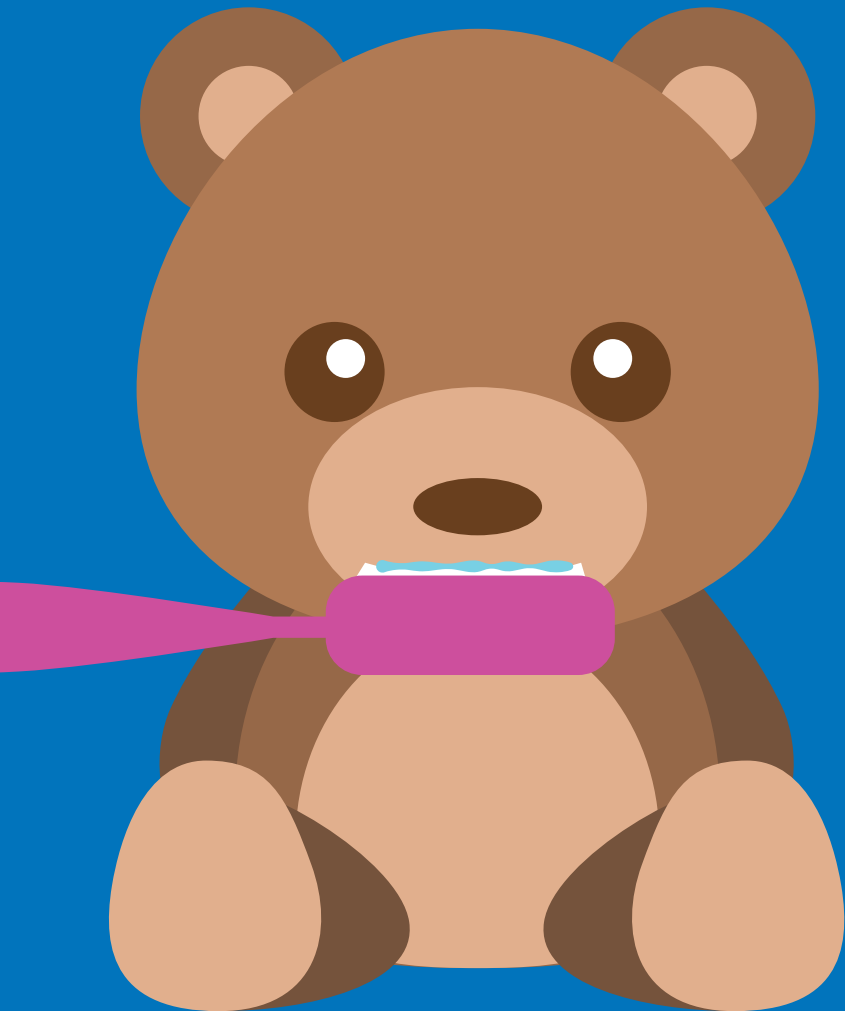
CHOMPER CHUMS

[iOS](#) and [Android](#)

This app, by United Concordia Dental, has animal characters a child can choose from. They'll learn good technique and the places inside the mouth to brush by seeing it on their animal's mouth. It also includes a brushing timer and your child can earn coins by doing different activities and maintaining good oral hygiene.

#10: PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

There's a surprising learning curve for teeth brushing. None of us were born knowing how to banish plaque. As with everything else in life, practice really does make perfect. It also helps your child see that brushing isn't all that bad.



- Let your kiddo practice on a stuffed animal. You demonstrate first and then ask them to polish their teddy bear's furry teeth to perfection.
- Have them take a turn brushing your teeth. First, everybody wash their hands. Then, using a clean, new toothbrush, play a game of dentist. Smile wide and let your child brush your teeth. Then, turn the tables and brush their teeth.
- When time is tight and your kid doesn't have the dexterity to properly brush, it's tempting to just do it yourself. When you can, allow them to brush their own teeth. It will give them a sense of accomplishment and they'll learn how to hold the toothbrush and develop proper technique. When they're done, follow up to get any areas they missed.

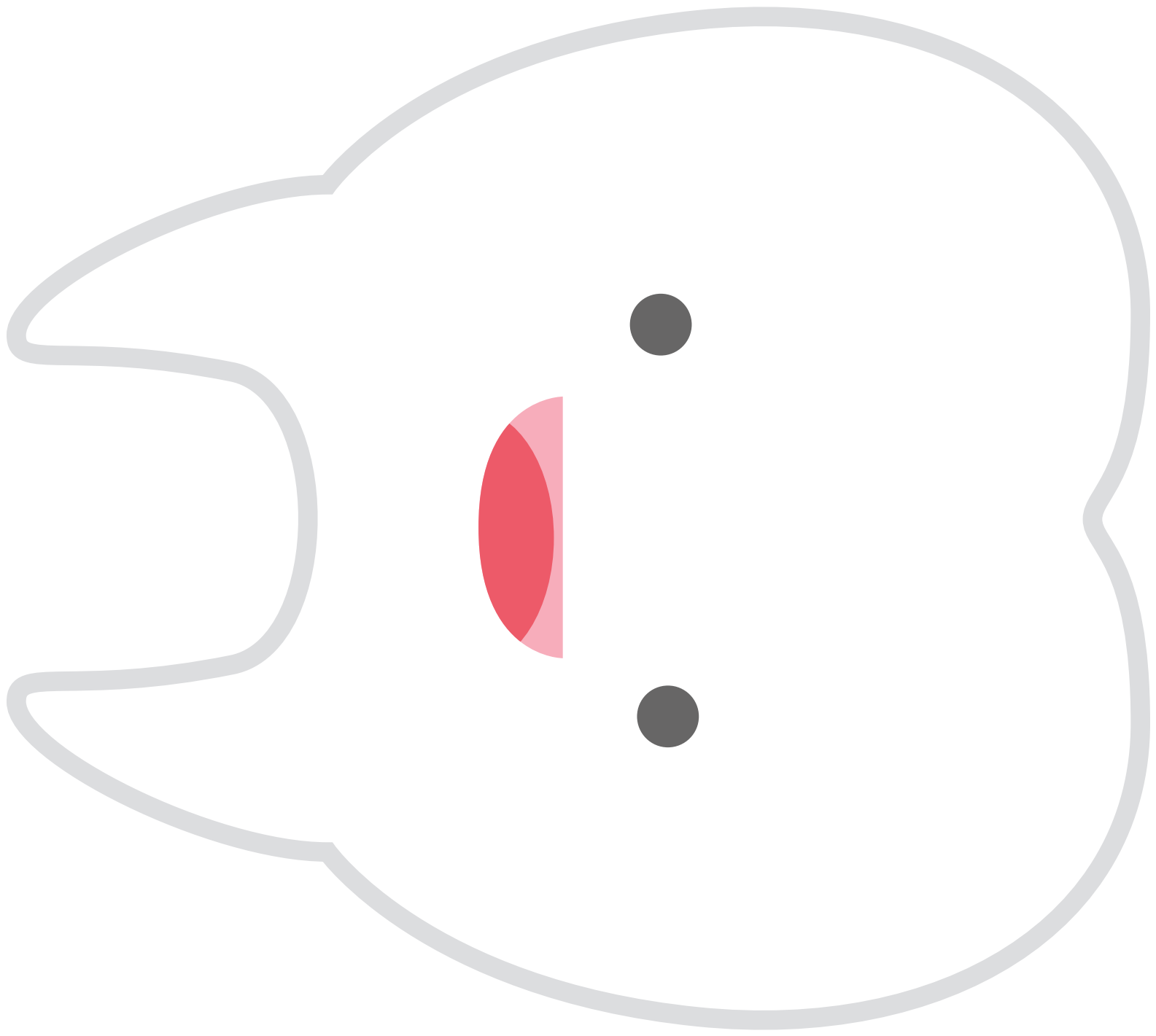
#11: BRUSH YOUR FRIENDLY TOOTH PAL

YOU'LL NEED

- An awesome tooth template (see the next page) .
- Piece of thick cardstock
- Sheet of transparency paper
- Scissors
- Pencil
- Glue stick
- Dry erase markers

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1** Print out our tooth template on the next page.
- 2** Cut out the tooth and lay it on a piece of cardstock. Now, trace the tooth template and cut out the cardstock in the same shape.
- 3** Glue the template on top of the cardstock, so the tooth now has a firm backing.
- 4** Cover it with transparency paper.
- 5** Draw food, mouth monsters or whatever you'd like on the transparency paper with dry erase markers, so it looks like it's one dirty tooth.
- 6** Let your kid use an old toothbrush to brush it off. Demonstrate the technique and have them work on their skills in a playful way.



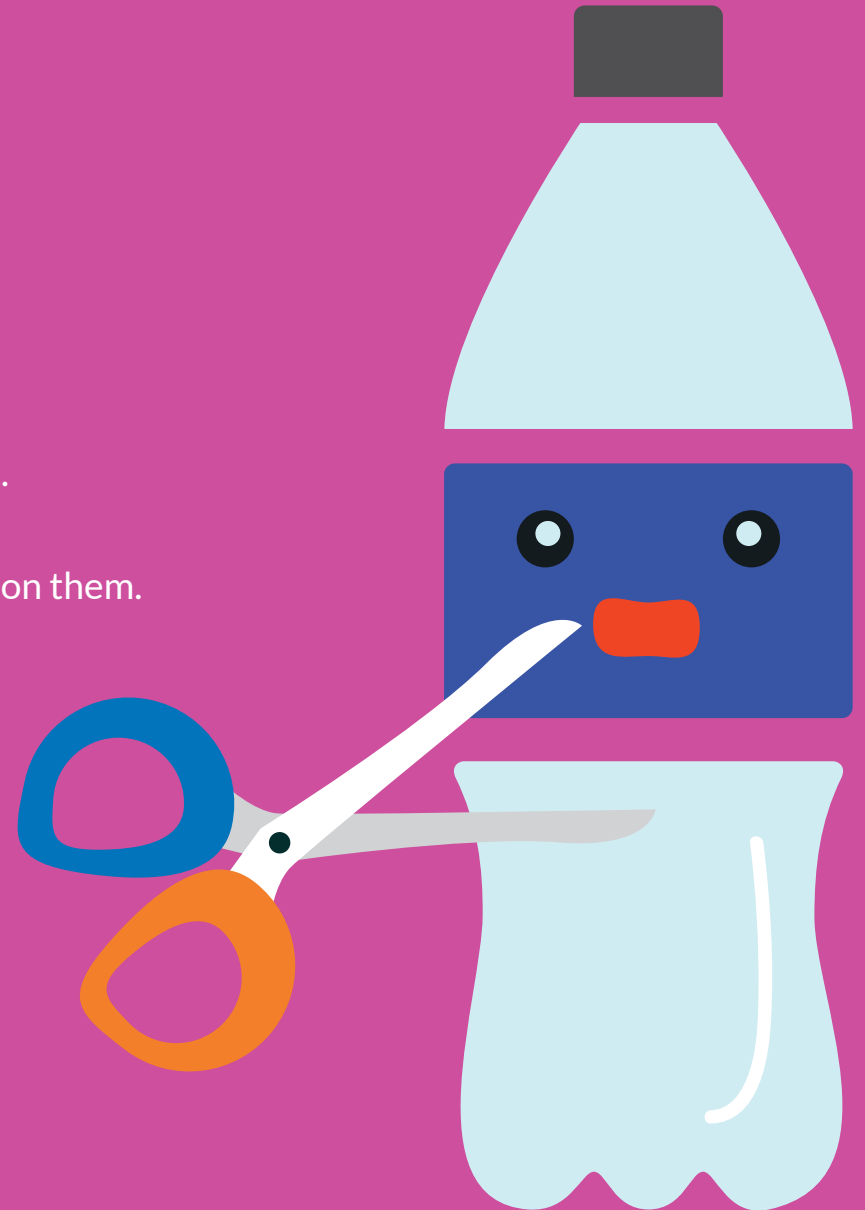
#12: CLEAN THOSE MOLARS

YOU'LL NEED

- Plastic 2-liter soda bottles
- Scissors
- An old toothbrush
- Toothpaste (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1** Cut the bottoms off of empty soda bottles to create molars.
- 2** Flip them upside down and let your child practice brushing on them.





IF ALL ELSE FAILS, ENLIST HELP!

Your kiddo's baby teeth play a number of important roles like saving space for the permanent teeth, aiding in jaw, muscle and facial development and helping your child chew and speak properly. Keeping these adorable little teeth healthy and cavity-free ensures they can stick around to do their job until they're ready to fall out naturally. So, no matter how much resistance your child puts up, you can't skip the brushing and flossing. If nothing seems to be working and your child isn't swayed by the fun activities, it's time to call in a pro. Schedule a visit with a pediatric dentist. They can educate your little one about the importance of oral hygiene using kid-friendly terms and give you guidance and recommendations.

Do you live in the Naperville, IL area? Book a visit at Innovative Pediatric Dentistry and we'll partner with you to come up with a plan that has your child brushing and flossing like a champ!

**Book An
Appointment Today!**

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