

# Dough (plaque) cleaning



## Intent

This activity is an ideal way for children to understand how food and plaque can become trapped in their teeth and learn how both brushing and flossing helps to remove this debris and keep their teeth clean. This supports their understanding of health and self-care while also encouraging curiosity about the world around them.

## Implementation

Introduce the activity with a group discussion or story to engage the children and introduce the concept of how food and plaque can build up on teeth if they are not brushed properly.

Use simple, age-appropriate language to explain the importance of keeping teeth clean and healthy. Introduce the resources, this could be an upside-down ice cube tray or a set of model teeth (with the mechanism removed). Small pieces of play dough are used to represent plaque or leftover food stuck in the teeth. Start by demonstrating how brushing or flossing can remove the play dough from the model, showing the cleaning effect clearly. Encourage each child to have a turn using a toothbrush or string to clean away the play dough. Try using a two-minute timer to reinforce the recommended brushing duration, helping children understand how long they should brush their teeth in real life.

Talk with the children about what they're doing and why, using open-ended questions and encouraging descriptive language to support communication and language development. Offer support with technique, showing children how to use gentle, circular motions with the brush.

Throughout the activity, you should ensure that all resources used, such as toothbrushes, trays, and play dough, are cleaned and sanitised according to the setting's hygiene and health policies.

## Impact

Children will gain a visual and physical understanding of the importance of brushing their teeth and the correct technique to do so. The activity builds their awareness of personal hygiene, promotes independence, and reinforces healthy habits. It also supports fine motor development and provides opportunities for discussion and language development around health and self-care.

## Things you may need

- Ice cube tray
- Wind up teeth (remember to take out the mechanics)
- Play-dough
- Toothbrushes
- Timer



## Links to EYFS

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development

## Characteristics of Effective Learning

- Creating and Thinking Critically
- Playing and Exploring
- Active Learning

**Find out more about oral health**  
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