

Sensory Play: Toothpaste



Intent

By exploring toothpaste, children begin to understand its texture, purpose, and how it helps to clean teeth. This supports early learning about self-care and personal hygiene, particularly the importance of brushing teeth regularly to maintain a healthy mouth.

The activity also provides opportunities for developing fine motor skills and language, as children feel the toothpaste with their fingers, and engage in meaningful conversations with adults about oral hygiene. It is accessible and inclusive for all age groups, including very young children and those with sensory needs.

Implementation

Provide each child with their own small amount of toothpaste in a bowl or surface. Children can use their fingers to push, spread, and move the toothpaste around. If children are hesitant to get their hands messy moving the toothpaste around, provide toothpaste in a zip-lock bag so children can have a sensory experience by manipulating the bag.

Supervise closely and talk to the children throughout the activity, using simple and age-appropriate language to explain:

- What toothpaste is
- Why we use it
- How it helps keep our teeth clean and healthy

The sensory element makes the learning tangible and reinforces the concept of toothbrushing as part of a daily routine. Practitioners should accompany this activity with discussion about the importance of children brushing their teeth right before bed time, as the fluoride from the toothpaste can work its magic overnight and kill the germs that sit on our teeth. Practitioners can make toothpaste exciting for children by explaining you can get lots of different types and flavours but reminding them it must have fluoride - make this a key word. Remind the children that they must use a pea sized amount when brushing.

Impact

Children will develop early awareness of oral hygiene and the role of toothpaste in keeping teeth clean. They will begin to associate toothbrushing with health and self-care in a positive and exploratory way. Through hands-on, sensory play, children will also strengthen their fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination. The activity also helps children become familiar with the idea of using a toothbrush, preparing them for real-life experiences at home or during role-play. Long term, this activity contributes to building children's confidence and independence in managing their personal hygiene routines, laying the foundations for lifelong healthy habits.

Things you may need

- Toothpaste
- Zip lock bags



Links to EYFS

- Communication and Language
- Understanding the World
- Physical Development

Characteristics of Effective Learning

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

Find out more about oral health
www.supervisedtoothbrushing.com



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