



### Introduction

The busy holiday season is nearly upon us, and this month we start it all off with Halloween (Tuesday, October 31st). For many families, getting ready for Halloween means pumpkin carving, Halloween costumes, and candy, candy, CANDY! Whether or not your family celebrates Halloween, this time of year is a great opportunity to talk **dental health**.

What does dental health mean to you and your family? In this month's newsletter, we provide a few ideas to promote dental health and to make dental care part of your daily routine.

This series of newsletters is inspired by and created just for parents. If you have suggestions, comments, or ideas for future newsletters please email: [opec@oregonstate.edu](mailto:opec@oregonstate.edu). For additional parenting resources, like us on Facebook (Oregon Parenting Education Collaborative) and follow us on Twitter (@OPECParentingEd).

### Why Dental Care, and Why Now?



Did you know that Oregon has one of the highest rates of child dental disease in the United States? Oregon is also ranked among the bottom five states for untreated dental disease. These are pretty grim statistics, but this also means that there is a lot of opportunity for improvement! As a start, some of our OPEC Parenting Hubs teach dental health in their parenting education classes. You can find contact information for your local OPEC Parenting Hub on our website at: <https://orparenting.org/parents/opec-parenting-hubs/>.



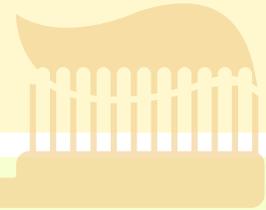
### Win the Battle of the Brush: How to Make Toothbrushing Fun

We all want our kids to have strong, healthy teeth. By setting an example for your children early in life, you help them to understand the importance of good dental care, which can directly impact their overall health. Knowing this is important, the bigger question is how to do it. It's not always as simple as asking a child to brush his teeth and then watching to make sure he spends enough time on those molars. Sometimes, children simply refuse and as parents we need to have tools in our 'parenting toolbox' to make dental care a fun and rewarding experience for the family. Here are some age-based recommendations and tips to win the battle of the brush!



## Age-Based Recommendations

- **Babies:** Before your baby's first tooth comes through, use a small washcloth to wipe her mouth and gums. Once your baby has her first tooth, it's time to think about cleaning! Wipe the teeth gently with a small washcloth.
- **Young children:** Brush your young child's teeth at least twice per day. Ask your child's dentist or pediatrician when you should start using toothpaste.
- **School-aged children:** It's time to have your child brush his own teeth (but parents should double-check!). Once teeth are touching, it is also time to start flossing. Regular visits to the dentist are helpful because the dentist can help your child (and you!) understand the proper methods for brushing and flossing.



## Tips to Win the Battle of the Brush

- **Supervise, but BE the fun maker!** Just because you have the important job of supervising, doesn't mean you can't be part of the fun! Brush together and use song and dance to make it a fun activity (\*Choose a song that is at least 2 minutes long!).
- **Use the power of 'make believe.'** Take your child's favorite stuffed animal and ask your child to 'pretend' to brush his teeth. Use fun, imaginary dialogue with the stuffed animal to show how 'cool' it is to take good care of teeth.
- **Offer choices.** A young child will feel like a 'big kid' if you provide choices when it is time to brush her teeth. You can ask, "Do you want to brush before or after your bath?" or "Do you want to use the red cup or the blue cup to rinse?"
- **Establish a routine.** After you finish eating, 'close the kitchen,' and start the process of getting those teeth brushed. By doing this, you avoid the 'end of the night crankiness' and reinforce the routine in your schedule.

## Fun With Your Kid! *Decorate a Mini Pumpkin*



What you Need: mini pumpkins, markers, paints, pom poms, glitter, glue, etc.,  
Directions: using any craft materials, decorate a mini pumpkin together. For example, you can paint a shape on the pumpkin and then help your child to glue pom-poms over the shape to make a 'Pom-Pom Pumpkin'! See this article for this and other fun ideas:  
<http://www.parents.com/holiday/halloween/crafts/nocarve-pumpkin-ideas/>



### References

<http://mouthmonsters.mychildrensteeth.org/tips-for-parents/>  
Leong, A. (2017, July 6). Sugar Shockers: Integrating Dental Health Education into OPEC [Webinar]. In *OPEC Webinar Series*.



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