

Brushing Teeth for Sensitive Children

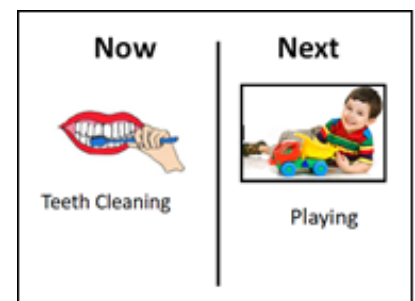
Some children have sensitivities in their mouth which can make the daily routine of teeth brushing uncomfortable. These sensitivities can include touch, smell, taste or a combination. There are a variety of ideas that can be trialed to make teeth brushing more tolerable.



Setting up for success

Before starting it is important that the bathroom is set up in a way to allow your child to feel comfortable.

- Ensure the bathroom is at a good temperature so that your child will want to spend several minutes there.
- Consider any smells that the bathroom may have that may be unpleasant. This may include strong chemical smell from bleach and bathroom cleaner.
- Can your child reach the sink easily and see themselves in the mirror, a small step next to the sink may be helpful
- The morning routine can be noisy and busy in any household. Consider what time in the morning is best to brush teeth when your child is most calm and you have a little extra time
- Putting up a poster of something your child really likes (e.g. Thomas the Tank Engine) may motivate your child to stay in the bathroom
- Remember to brush after breakfast, not before (breakfast cereal can be very sugary).
- Teeth should be brushed twice a day: morning & before bed.
- Avoid sugary foods, sweets and soft drinks (e.g. coke) as this increases the chance of tooth decay.
- Use a now and next board to give your child an opportunity to get ready for the task and/or to identify an instant reward for afterwards.



Toothbrush and toothpaste

Each child has a different preference and therefore you may need to try different toothbrushes and toothpastes.

- When choosing toothpaste consider what your child likes to eat, is it strong flavoured food or bland food? Choose toothpaste that can have a similar strength of flavour.
- Your child may benefit from a time to play with the toothpaste to get used to the smell. Introducing the toothpaste during play will mean your child will have an opportunity to explore it away from the pressures of the routine.
- If your child refuses the toothpaste then it is ok to start with just the teeth brushing and then later introduce toothpaste. It is better to be doing some of the routine than none of it





- Sometimes having a variety of toothbrushes and toothpastes for your child to choose at each routine may give them some control over the routine. Some may also like to start with the electric toothbrush and then swap to a manual half way
- If able get your child to choose their own toothbrush in the shops. You can make it a special treat!
- Nuk toothbrush- While this is targeted for babies this is a soft toothbrush which may be helpful for older children too.
www.nuk.co.uk/product/nuk-training-toothbrush-set/
- Singing toothbrush- this gives children a predictable time frame of the completion of teeth brushing
- Electric toothbrush- Can help to provide some deep pressure and massage the gums. It is important when introducing the toothbrush that it does not go straight into your child's mouth, and rather allow them to have a play and opportunity to explore it.
- Toothbrush with a favourite character or object- This will make this more motivating and could become more playful
- Colliscurve toothbrush- the curve in the brush avoids brushing the gums
www.colliscurve.co.uk
- You can use mouth wash plaque removal for older children



Teeth cleaning ideas

- As challenging at the morning routine is it is important that when it is time for teeth brushing your child walks into the bathroom in a calm manner
- Put as much toothpaste as they will tolerate on the brush. If they are able to be part of it by holding the toothbrush or toothpaste it may give them more control
- Sometimes using warm water instead of cold could help
- Encourage your child to put the toothbrush into their mouth themselves
- Ensure you do the same steps in the same order each time, e.g. top then bottom, side, front, side
- It may be helpful to follow a picture schedule (see below) so your child knows what is going on.
- Using a song, sandtimer/timer or counting can help your child to know when it will end
- Encourage your child to stand in front of a mirror to know where the toothbrush is in their mouth.
- Encourage your child to do as much of the brushing themselves as possible, even hand over hand can be helpful
- Brushing your teeth with them, or getting their siblings involved could help as well.
- Give your child a reward at the end such as praise, sticker, stamp or something else that is motivating for them (not sweets!)



brush top
right teeth



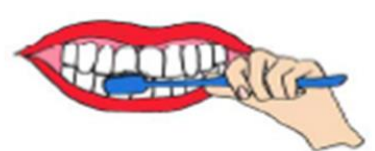
brush top
left teeth



brush bottom
right teeth



brush bottom
left teeth



brush front
of teeth