






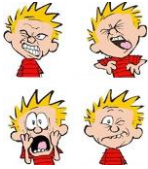

Teeth cleaning

Brushing teeth is an essential part of oral hygiene and it is recommended to try to establish good habits as early as possible.

It is recommended that all children brush their teeth two times per day; in the morning and last thing at night. Ensuring your child has set times of day that they brush their teeth will mean it becomes part of their daily morning and evening routine, for example bath, pyjamas, brush teeth, story and bed.

It is recommended that children receive assistance to brush their teeth until at least the age of 7 when they have developed the motor coordination required to reach all their teeth. This age will depend on each individual child and their own development. Encouraging younger children to practise tooth brushing before you take over to 'check' is a good way to involve them as well as support with any sensitivity they may be experiencing (from a tactile perspective it is easier to tolerate brushing your own teeth as opposed to having your teeth brushed for you).

To improve a child's awareness around and in their mouth encourage them to engage in activities such as:

- Blowing musical instruments – whistle, harmonica, mouth organ etc. 
- Playing blow football/sheep – use a straw to blow a cotton wool ball across a smooth surface.
- Blowing mini windmills. 
- Blowing through a straw or tube into water - use different sizes and shapes – curly/long etc.
- Blowing bubbles. 
- Creating pictures by blowing blobs of paint along the paper with a straw. 
- Making faces in the mirror.
- Encourage them to apply firm pressure around their mouth and lips whilst face washing, for example by pressing with a flannel
- Encourage them to practice locating points on their face - pointing to lips, nose, cheeks, eyebrows etc
- Using blow pens for pictures 

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Encourage them to brush their teeth in front of a mirror at a comfortable height so that they can see what they are doing – consider using a step if necessary.

They may find it easier to sit whilst brushing their teeth so that they have a more stable position.

Consider the handle of the tooth brush - they may find a thick chunky handle with non-slip material easier to control.

They can practice the control of a toothbrush by cleaning objects in front of them e.g. pretend teeth – make it fun.



If your child can only tolerate having a toothbrush in their mouth for brief periods try a multi-direction toothbrush which can reach multiple surfaces of your child's teeth at the same time: Dr. Barman's 'Superbrush' or Curved Toothbrush both available from the Fledglings brochure found on the Fledglings website.
<https://fledglings.org.uk/pages/oral-care-collection>.



They could also try using a vibrating toothbrush which can sometimes be easier to tolerate as it provides a firmer input than a manual toothbrush which can feel tickly to some.

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They may find it easier to use a pump dispenser rather than a tube of toothpaste.

Determine their preference for bristles – soft bristles may be easier for them to tolerate than harder ones initially.

To help them know how long they should brush for you could try playing a favourite song and encourage them to brush for the duration of the song (some toothbrushes play their own songs!).

Try wearing heavy towel/wheat bag around shoulders whilst brushing teeth to help calm and re-assure (deep pressure input), or sit in a large squishy bean bag which will provide a similar input.

Explore age appropriate tooth brushing apps to encourage engagement or consider using printed visual prompt cards to support with the sequencing of teeth cleaning.

Consider the flavour of tooth paste, non-flavoured varieties (e.g. 'Ora Nurse') are available if necessary.

Ensure your child is receiving regular dental check-ups.



Please see: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/taking-care-of-childrens-teeth/> for general advice regarding tooth cleaning.