

Occupational Therapy Advice Sheet

Brushing Teeth



Children can excessively avoid and dislike teeth cleaning. Young children will need help and it's not uncommon for toddlers and children with developmental delay to resist. Dentists recommend that parents help kids up to 8 years to brush their teeth, e.g. at the start or the end.

Before

- Introduce teeth cleaning in pretend play, use books and songs to read and sing about brushing teeth, make it fun!
- Lead by example and model that you brush your teeth (and care for your oral health and teeth).
- Allow child to play with the toothbrush and attempt some brushing independently.
- Try joint compression to the head, neck and shoulders before tooth brushing. Deep touch pressure stimulates receptors in the joints by squeezing for a few seconds at a time, then releasing and repeating. This can relax, calm and increase a child's body awareness.
- Play tongue games before brushing - e.g. count teeth on right side with tongue, put tongue in cheek etc.
- General blowing and sucking games daily - e.g. blowing bubbles, drinking through straws, party poppers.
- Role play on teddy, doll or your child's favourite toy.
- Apply deep pressure to the cheeks with both hands prior to teeth cleaning - blow up cheeks and squash flat.
- Practise spitting out small amounts of water- leading to small amounts of toothpaste use.
- Explain why it's important. Consider use of a social story- speak to your Occupational Therapist/Speech and Language Therapist.

During

- Allow your child to hold one toothbrush and use a second for brushing. Consider using a medium texture toothbrush with a small head.
- Use novelty toothbrushes with your child's favourite character (or ones that light up). Let them choose.
- Trial bicarbonate based/flavourless toothpastes - this can help stop gagging.

- Use a soft bristle toothbrush and a small amount of fluoride toothpaste (rice grain size for children under 3 years, pea-size for 3-6 years).
- Provide a mirror so the child can see their mouth during brushing.
- Use an electrical toothbrush – the vibrations provide deep pressure and can help calm and organise. Electric toothbrush can also be used on face and cheeks before teeth brushing to desensitise.
- Visual timers are great to help the child with the concept of 2 minutes and as a visual distraction e.g.
- Pick a 2-3 minute song with your child and play that as a 'timer'
- Increasing the handle size will help with grasp, e.g. foam



Visual Timer



After

- Use reward charts, stickers and commend your child's effort with praise. "I like how you brushed for the whole 2 minutes!"

www.mytoothbetold.com

Useful Resources & Supplier:

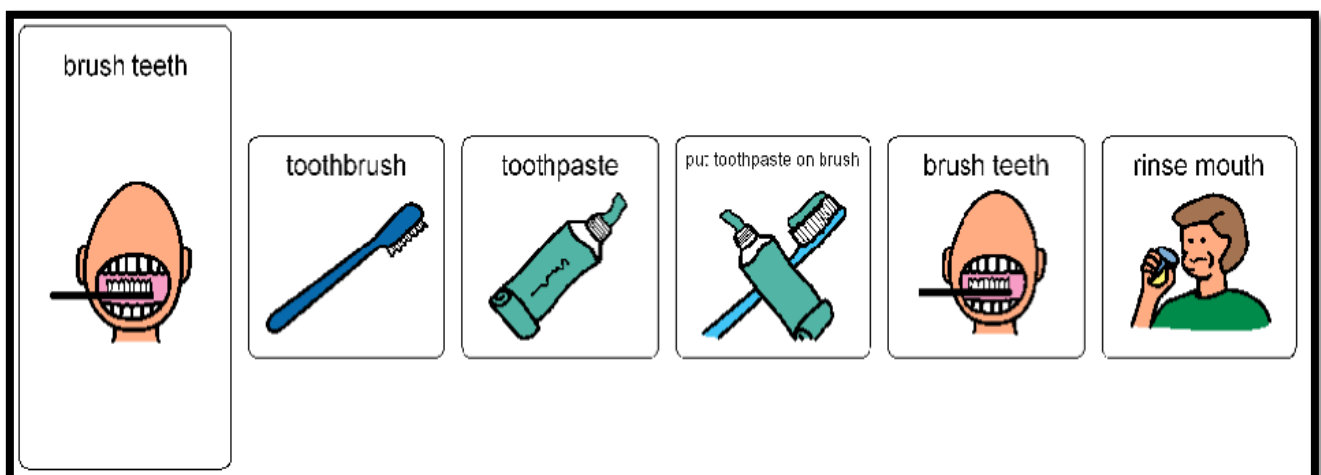
- YouTube Link *Learning to Brush Teeth & Hair*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKyOVrAPMZA>
- Toothbrushes and finger toothbrush – Mothercare, Pharmacies.
- Barman's Superbrush- 3-sided brush cleans all surfaces simultaneously.
- Soft chewable toothbrush – Pharmacy e.g. Boots.
- Electric toothbrush with small head - pharmacy, Amazon, Tesco etc
- Flavourless toothpaste - e.g. OraNurse via Amazon
- Fruit flavoured/mild mint / bicarbonate of soda-based toothpaste – Pharmacy e.g. Boots.
- Chewable toothbrush – Fuzzybrush- Lloyd pharmacy, Amazon.
- Plaqsearch- teach good brushing habits- visual reminder of where teeth plaque is- Pharmacy e.g. Boots.
- Timer toothbrush with light – Pharmacy e.g. Boots.
- Talk to a dentist about your child's oral hygiene and development.
- Visual Schedule- cut out & stick up to support your child.



Barman's Superbrush
www.sensationalkids.com



Tepe Plaque Search Tablets



Source: www.livinawellwithautism.com