

Healthy Habits for Happy Smiles



Toothbrushing Tips for Your Child with a Disability

Some children with disabilities need extra help to take care of their teeth. Young children, especially those with a physical, emotional, behavioral, intellectual, or communication disability, may not have the fine motor skills they need to clean their teeth well. It's important to brush and help your child with toothbrushing.



School readiness begins with health!



Tips for brushing your child's teeth and making it a good experience:

- **Choose a toothbrush made for children.** Look for toothbrushes with soft bristles and a small head made for brushing a child's teeth. Let your child pick a toothbrush that is a favorite color. Or let your child pick one that has a favorite character on the handle.
- **Use oral hygiene aids.** If it is hard for your child to hold a toothbrush, look for a toothbrush with a thick handle, or make the handle thicker by putting it inside a tennis ball. The toothbrush handle can also be strapped to your child's hand with a hair band or Velcro. Another way is to place a hand over the child's hand to guide the toothbrush as the child brushes.

- **Use fluoride toothpaste that your child likes.** Fluoride toothpaste comes in different flavors and colors. Find one that your child likes and feels good in his or her mouth.
- **Use the right amount of fluoride toothpaste.** An adult should always place toothpaste on the toothbrush. For children under age 3, use a smear (size of a grain of rice) of toothpaste. For children ages 3 to 6, use a pea-size amount of toothpaste. Encourage your child to spit and not swallow the remaining toothpaste.
- **Make toothbrushing fun.** Sing a song while brushing your child's teeth. Or count or say the alphabet while you brush your child's teeth. You can also tell a story, say a nursery rhyme, or make animal sounds while brushing.



Use a smear for children under age 3.



Use a pea-size amount for children ages 3 to 6.

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