

Tips for Teeth brushing

For many parents it can be a difficult task to get your child to brush their teeth. But for some parents of autistic children it can be a daily challenge, one that requires careful consideration.

It is worthwhile observing your child over time to see if you can identify the possible reasons why they refuse to brush their teeth.

We have provided some general guidance on things to consider:

We always recommend that professional medical advice is sought if it's becoming difficult to maintain regular dental hygiene. If your child or young person cannot access a mainstream dentist, the NHS offers a community dental service; this service has dentists available who have a specialist knowledge of autism and can offer additional support to those who need it.

- Start small and gradually increase. At first it may be that your child tolerates the brush in their mouth without toothpaste, this is a step in the right direction.
- Provide an incentive in a clear consistent format, using a now and then card you can communicate now- Teeth brushing, then – preferred item.
- Applying deep pressure before attempting teeth brushing can help to calm the nervous system, try applying this to the face and mouth area. Using a vibrating toothbrush also provides deep pressure during teeth brushing.
- Complete an environmental check of the bathroom - you can download our bathroom checklist for ideas. Try and keep the environment as calm as possible, consider lighting, noise and smells from cleaning products that are commonly used in bathrooms
- Consider the brush and allow the person to be involved in choosing their own brush wherever possible. There are also more sensory friendly versions of brushes available including ones with softer bristles and three sided toothbrushes. If toothbrushes can't be tolerated, think about using dental wipes and mouthwash.

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- Encourage brushing of teeth in front of the mirror, this may give the feeling of being more in control.
 - Break the task down into small manageable steps, by making a visual timeline or written list. This will not only provide predictability but will help increase independence.
 - Consider the flavour of the toothpaste, you could try no flavour and no foam toothpaste. A popular one amongst our families is 'oranurse'.
 - To make teeth brushing as attractive as possible, try introducing coloured or sparkly toothpaste. A popular one on the market is Crayola: 'squeeze a colour.'
 - The use of disclosure tablets can give people a clear definition of where they need to brush, this can be made into a game, by racing the person to 'brush all the pink off their teeth.'
 - Downloading a tooth brushing app could also prove useful.





