

Activities of Daily Living

Brushing teeth

Brushing our teeth is an important activity of daily living that we participate in multiple times a day! It plays an important part in keeping our mouth and body healthy. Children may find teeth brushing challenging due to difficulties with their sensory processing, executive functioning and fine motor skills.

STRATEGIES

- Incorporate teeth brushing into your daily routine to help create predictability for your child.
- Use a visual sequence to show the steps of tooth brushing (i.e. put toothpaste on brush, brush teeth, spit out) to support with planning and sequencing.
- Role model- allow your child to see you brushing your teeth!
- Set a clear time limit. Try using a sand timer, visual timer, and the same song so your child knows when it will finish.
- Trial different flavours of toothpaste, for example, strawberry, plain, mint.
- Trial novelty tooth brushes with your child's favourite characters on to support motivation and interest.
- Trial toothbrushes with various bristles. Soft bristles or silicon brushes are often more easily tolerated compared to normal bristles. A brush with a thicker handle may be easier for your child to grasp.
- Trial electric tooth brush as this provides deep pressure, compared to the light touch of a regular toothbrush.
- Try different water temperatures to see what your child prefers.
- Try to find the most comfortable environment for them. For example, in the bath.
- Read books and sing songs about toothbrushing.
- Make it fun! Role play on dolls or teddies. Try making it a game by brushing away the 'germ bugs.'
- Provide a mirror so your child can see their mouth when brushing.
- Engage in heavy work activities prior to brushing their teeth. For example, jumping on the trampoline, animal walks, yoga poses, whole body deep pressure massage.
- Teach your child about the importance of toothbrushing and oral hygiene.
- Trial using a working towards chart where your child receives a token or tick for brushing their teeth each day. Provide them with something motivating at the end of the week (or agreed upon time), for example, going to their favourite place or a specific reward.

