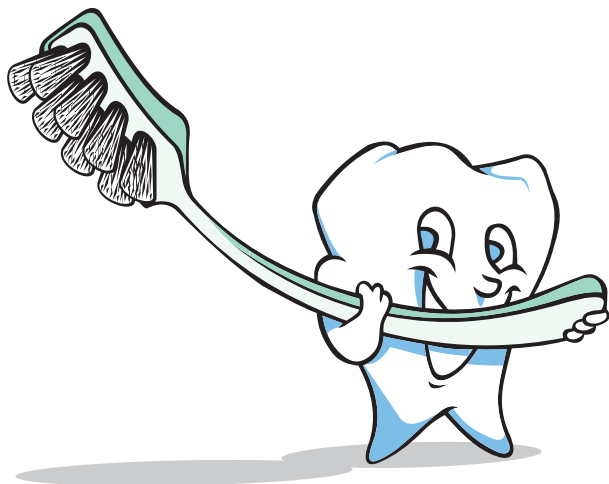


What *Can I Try?*

- ✓ Use a toothbrush with soft bristles
- ✓ Use a smaller toothbrush, such as toddler- or child-size toothbrush to make access easier
- ✓ Try a battery-operated toothbrush for stimulating gums and ease of tooth brushing
- ✓ Use a timer so it is clear when to stop brushing
- ✓ Use favorite music during brushing (Turn music on only when they are cooperating)
- ✓ Use first-then “first brush, then _____” (favorite activity) instructions
- ✓ Use an activity schedule to show when brushing occurs and what favorite activity comes next
- ✓ Make tooth brush easier to hold by attaching a strap or ball to the end



Resources

- ✓ **Florida Dental Association:** Dentists Care Project (850) 681-3629 ext. 304 <http://www.floridadental.org>
- ✓ **National Oral Health Information Clearinghouse:** <http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/OralHealth/OralHealthInformation/SpecialNeeds/>
- ✓ **Kids Dental Health:** http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/stay_healthy/body/teeth.html
- ✓ **Nisonger Center Dental Clinic:** <http://www.nisonger.osu.edu/dental>. (614) 292-3160.



Nisonger Center

Information provided by:

Florida Center for Inclusive Communities at University of South Florida, and Nisonger Center at The Ohio State University, both University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

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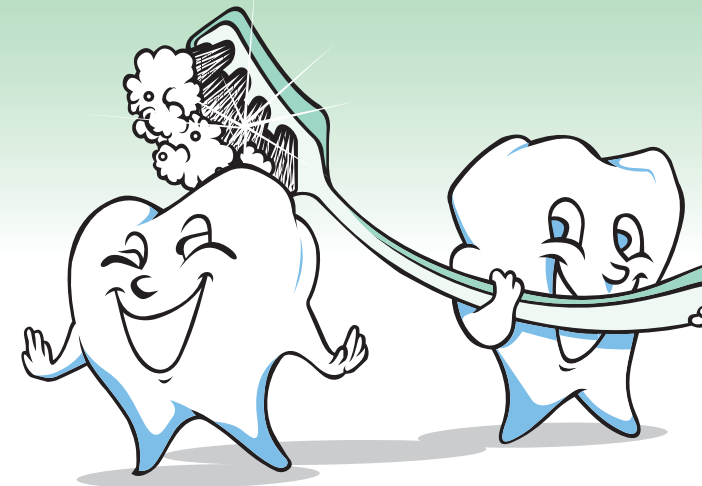
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For more information or to print additional copies visit <http://ffcc.org> or <http://nisonger.osu.edu/bhip/>

Mouth Matters:

Oral Health for People with Disabilities



Be Healthy Information Program
for Children and Adults with Disabilities

Oral Well-Being

Why is Oral Health *So Difficult?*

Many children and adults with disabilities:

- ✓ Don't like to brush, because their mouth and gums are extra sensitive
- ✓ Are scared of new places and experiences
- ✓ Do not have health insurance that pays for regular dental care or a dentist who will accept Medicaid

Certain disabilities present higher risk for dental problems (for example, Down Syndrome and Cerebral Palsy)

Why is Oral Health *Important?*

Good oral health is important for:

- ✓ Preventing tooth decay and gum disease
- ✓ Speaking clearly
- ✓ Eating many foods
- ✓ Being accepted socially and at work
- ✓ Feeling good about yourself

What is the *Worst* That Can Happen?

Poor oral health can cause:

- ✓ Tooth decay, gum disease and/ or bad breath
- ✓ Severe pain and irritability
- ✓ Problems chewing and swallowing
- ✓ Early tooth loss from decay or gum disease
- ✓ Bone loss from gum disease
- ✓ Infection that can spread to other parts of the body, including the heart



And:

- ✓ Poor self-esteem and social rejection because of appearance or bad breath
- ✓ Behavior problems due to pain
- ✓ Problems paying attention and learning at home, at school, or on the job

How do I *Support* Good Oral Health?

- ✓ Teach good brushing habits at a young age
- ✓ Be a role model for healthy habits
- ✓ Brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste
- ✓ Floss daily
- ✓ Visit the dentist at least once a year (every 6 months is best)
- ✓ Get a new toothbrush every 6 months and after being sick
- ✓ Prepare foods that are low in sugar and high in calcium

How can my Dentist Help?

- ✓ Allow extra time for the appointment
- ✓ Work slowly
- ✓ Break down the procedure for the patient by showing, telling, and doing each step
- ✓ Use simple language but speak to patient (not caregiver) as much as possible
- ✓ Take breaks, as needed, and praise cooperation
- ✓ Allow patients to stay in their wheelchair if they prefer
- ✓ Consider beginning with a short appointment and gradually building up treatment time