



TIP SHEET

Creative Methods for Brushing Teeth



Motivating any child to brush his or her teeth can be challenging. It can be especially challenging if your child is sensitive to certain sensory inputs—such as the feel of a toothbrush inside the mouth, the sound of teeth being brushed or the smell of toothpaste. Though brushing teeth might cause your child discomfort or anguish, it is important to help him or her make brushing at least twice a day a daily habit. Here are some creative strategies that might help your child have a more positive teeth brushing experience.

Try different places

If your child associates the bathroom sink only with unpleasant brushing experiences, you can try brushing somewhere new. The distraction of a television or the calming input of a bath might help make the task less stressful. Or, you can try brushing at school (make sure to clear this with your child's school before sending a toothbrush).

Try different positions

If your child seems uncomfortable standing while brushing, try different positions that may allow your child to relax: sitting in a beanbag chair, supporting his or her head and shoulders with your arm, or sitting on the floor.

Try motivators

Some children might like to sing a fun or silly song to make brushing more positive. Others might be motivated by watching a peer or sibling model appropriate brushing techniques, and then join along with them.

Try different toothbrushes

There are a variety of toothbrush options available for children. Test to see whether your child has a toothbrush preference. For example, some children like to use a motorized toothbrush because its vibrations can be comforting and its automation can reduce the amount of back-and-forth scrubbing action.

Try visual and auditory cues

A visual social strip can show your child the exact steps that he or she will be following. Another cue to help your child know how long the task will last is counting to 10 while brushing his or her top front teeth and then repeating for each of the other sections of the mouth.

Disclaimer: This information is provided for reference only. Consult your dentist before engaging in any procedures, practices, or treatments. Most of all, remember to be patient and keep trying new things! Finding the right strategies for your child can make brushing a fun and enjoyable habit that he or she will carry with him or her for the rest of his or her life.

These tips were compiled from a variety of sources. For more tip sheets, visit www.fraser.org.

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