



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Top Tips for Teeth Brushing

Sensory Processing

Issued by the Occupational Therapy Sensory Processing Team

Teeth brushing can be a very stressful and unpleasant experience for people who experience differences with their sensory processing.

The strategies below may help make the experience easier and more positive.

- Try sitting in front of a mirror when brushing teeth so they can see what is happening.
- Consider using a softer silicon bristle toothbrush initially to help tolerate the sensation on their teeth and gums before moving onto a normal toothbrush.
- Consider using a flannel with toothpaste if the person is unable to tolerate a toothbrush.
- Some people may prefer stronger-tasting toothpaste, so consider trying different flavours. If the taste from normal toothpaste is too strong consider using a non-flavoured fluoride toothpaste. Sometimes the foam from toothpaste can be distressing and it can be helpful to try non-foaming toothpaste.
- Create a consistent morning and evening routine with clear visual and verbal cues that lead to toothbrushing.
- Consider using a chewable sensory tool or foods that can wake up the mouth, for example, dried fruit or crusty bread before teeth brushing to reduce oral sensitivities.
- Try a face massage before brushing teeth brushing.
- Visual timers can show how long brushing will last. Consider listening to a song during brushing, this can also provide a finish point and provide a distraction helping to reduce any anxiety. Please see the resources below.

- Promote choice and independence by encouraging the person to choose their own toothbrush and toothpaste to support engagement. If they are not fully independent with brushing their teeth encourage them to complete sections of their mouth and slowly work their way up to allow them to brush all their teeth.

- Some people may require increased sensation to be able to tolerate teeth brushing. Consider trying a vibrating toothbrush, encourage the person to handle the toothbrush first, then place it on the back of their hand, and allow them to put it on the outside of their cheek, and then finally into their mouth.

Additional information

Please see below some resources to help make teeth brushing a fun and engaging activity.

Please see this NHS website for helpful teeth-brushing tips for children of all ages.

Children's teeth – NHS <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-teeth-and-gums/taking-care-of-childrens-teeth/>

Teeth Brushing Timer App: Appropriate for adults and children.
<https://www.brushdj.com>

You can access this by scanning the QR code to the right.

Video strategies for teeth brushing developed by Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust Sensory Service.

Making Sense: Teeth Brushing

You can access this by scanning the QR code to the left.

Please see the following retailers for suggested silicon toothbrushes: dental-aesthetics.co.uk

You can access this by scanning the QR code to the right.

Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS)

You may be able to claim a refund of some travel costs under this scheme. For more information visit the NHS website:

www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/healthcosts/pages/travelcosts.aspx

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, easy read, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on 03 44 811 8118.



British Sign Language users can use InterpretersLive! a service provided by Sign Solutions. This helps Deaf people to access BSL interpreters, and other communication professionals at any time. More information can be found on our website or by scanning the QR code to the left.

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: 0800 032 0202

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries 03 44 811 8111

www.northumbria.nhs.uk

PIN 1022/V1

Review date: June 2029

© This material is the copyright of the Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.