Toothbrushing Tips for Your Child with a Disability

Some children with disabilities need extra help to take care of their teeth. Young children, especially those with a physical, emotional, behavioral, intellectual, or communication disability, may not have the fine motor skills they need to clean their teeth well. It’s important to brush and help your child with toothbrushing.

*School readiness begins with health!*
Tips for brushing your child’s teeth and making it a good experience:

- **Choose a toothbrush made for children.** Look for toothbrushes with soft bristles and a small head made for brushing a child’s teeth. Let your child pick a toothbrush that is a favorite color. Or let your child pick one that has a favorite character on the handle.

- **Use oral hygiene aids.** If it is hard for your child to hold a toothbrush, look for a toothbrush with a thick handle, or make the handle thicker by putting it inside a tennis ball. The toothbrush handle can also be strapped to your child’s hand with a hair band or Velcro. Another way is to place a hand over the child’s hand to guide the toothbrush as the child brushes.

- **Use fluoride toothpaste that your child likes.** Fluoride toothpaste comes in different flavors and colors. Find one that your child likes and feels good in his or her mouth.

- **Use the right amount of fluoride toothpaste.** An adult should always place toothpaste on the toothbrush. For children under age 3, use a smear (size of a grain of rice) of toothpaste. For children ages 3 to 6, use a pea-size amount of toothpaste. Encourage your child to spit and not swallow the remaining toothpaste.

- **Make toothbrushing fun.** Sing a song while brushing your child’s teeth. Or count or say the alphabet while you brush your child’s teeth. You can also tell a story, say a nursery rhyme, or make animal sounds while brushing.

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