

Encouraging Tooth Brushing

HELPFUL HINTS

The following types of sensory input are calming to our systems. Providing these opportunities prior to trying tooth brushing may help to reduce your child's anxiety.

- Slow rhythmic **movement** such as swinging or rocking in one direction i.e. back and forth or side to side.
- **Deep pressure** to muscles and joints e.g. massage or firm squeezing. Make your child into a 'sandwich' ask them to lie down on a blanket and pretend to put fillings on them by pressing cushions or cuddly toys on to her with a fair amount of **pressure**. Then wrap them up tight, giving them a '**bear hug**'.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Try using a piece of gauze or wash cloth wrapped around your own finger. Dip it in toothpaste. Fluoride wash, or just plain water to start with – this will still remove a large amount of bacteria.
- Prior to brushing teeth allow your child to complete oral motor activities such as blowing bubbles or chewing oral motor toys. This may provide calming sensory input to mouth and to reduce the sensory impact from brushing teeth.
- Brush teeth with warm water rather than cold water.



- Try an electric toothbrush or tooth brushes with extra soft bristles. Your child may only accept feeling the vibration on her cheeks initially, but slowly build up to her accepting the toothbrush inside her mouth.
- Try different types and flavours of toothpaste or flavourless toothpaste.
- Encourage your child to brush their tongue and the insides of their cheeks to try to reduce the sensitivity in her mouth.
- Try having a break during brushing i.e. brush top teeth, play for 10 minutes, brush bottom teeth.
- Try singing a song so that your child will know that when the song finishes the brushing will finish.
- Let your child sit in your lap and nestle into you. This may help them to cope with having their teeth brushed.
- Let your child have some control over the brush.

