

Learning Links' Tip Sheet

Teeth Brushing



Some children do not enjoy their teeth being brushed and this can cause anxiety for parents.

The first step if there is a problem is to find the cause of the problem. Is it sensory; for example, is it the feel of the toothbrush, smell of toothpaste or the taste of toothpaste?

Many types of toothpaste are mint flavoured and some children do not like this flavour. Macleans' Junior Jaws and Oral-B (some types) do not have a mint taste. These can sometimes be difficult to find so ask your chemist or local supermarket if they can get them in for you.

Is the cause of the problem behavioural? Does your child have bad memories of tooth brushing, a dental visit, an accident or something else that involves their teeth?

Some strategies to try

If your child's head and mouth are sensitive, you can try to desensitise the area by deep pressure to the head and jaw, sweeping around the mouth and inside the mouth. (For sensory issues a full Sensory Profile is recommended.)

Choose a predictable time each day that you will be cleaning teeth. For example, brush teeth in the morning after breakfast and at night before bedtime. Let your child have a turn at brushing, however, until a child is 10 years old, dentists often recommend that you should brush your child's teeth as well or supervise the brushing carefully.

Play games such as counting while brushing or singing, "this is the way we brush our teeth". Your child could also copy you brushing your teeth or you could brush your teeth together. You could also role play with dolls or other toys, saying, "Let's brush teddy's teeth".

Read books about brushing teeth or make up your own picture story using photos of your child brushing their teeth. Take photos of their tooth brush, toothpaste, bathroom and your child brushing and put them together in a book.

The information in Learning Links' Tip Sheets is prepared by experienced early childhood professionals. Each child is unique and this material is not necessarily suitable for every child, parent or carer. We recommend you discuss this information with your child's therapist or education professional prior to using these tips.



Copyright ©Learning Links 2009. The material in this publication cannot be reproduced without the written permission of Learning Links. Learning Links is a non-profit children's charity working in partnership with families to help children who have difficulty learning. For more information go to www.learninglinks.org.au