



**Integrated Community Paediatric Services
Paediatric Occupational Therapy Service**




Worksheet L

Teeth Brushing

Supervise tooth brushing until your child is seven or eight years old. Do this by either brushing their teeth yourself or, if they brush their own teeth, by watching how they do it. From the age of seven or eight, they should be able to brush their own teeth, but it's still a good idea to watch them now and again to make sure they brush properly and brush for two minutes.

Area of Difficulty	Strategy	Tick when strategy has been tried and add comments.
Child struggles to hold their toothbrush.	A toothbrush with a chunky handle will be easier for the child to hold (Battery operated toothbrushes often have novelty chunky handles). 	
	Offer hand over hand support	
Child struggles to orientate the brush around their mouth to clean all of their teeth and struggles with the brushing action.	Use a mirror. They will feel more in control if they can see what they are doing, and the visual feedback will be helpful for them to orientate the brush in their mouth. A footbox/step may be required so the child can see themselves in the mirror.	
	Giant teeth brushing puppet models can be used to demonstrate and let the child practice the actions required	
	A finger toothbrush may be easier for your child to use and could be used to help them explore areas of their mouth outside of tooth brushing times 	
	Offer hand over hand support to help your child learn the movements and pressure required	
	An electric toothbrush may be useful. The child will only need to position the toothbrush in their mouth and not coordinate the brushing action as well.	

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	<p>Use a 3-sided toothbrush. This will help provide a more thorough clean.</p> 	
<p>Child struggles to squeeze toothpaste onto brush.</p>	<p>Children may find it easier to use toothpaste in a pump dispenser or tube squeezer.</p> 	
	<p>Provide hand over hand support to help the child feel the pressure required.</p>	
	<p>Practise squeezing other tubes, e.g. icing tubes to decorate cakes, glitter glue during Art and Craft.</p>	
<p>Child struggles to complete the correct steps of the task</p>	<p>Use visual cues, such as a photo, illustration or symbol to prompt. Follow a consistent sequence, for example:</p>  <p>Visuals can be found on Twinl.co.uk and do2learn.com</p>	
	<p>Break the task down. The child starts by putting toothpaste on the brush and over time they take more responsibility as they grow in confidence</p>	
<p>Child avoids or dislikes cleaning their teeth.</p>	<p>Make tooth brushing as fun as possible e.g. sing songs and use fun apps (see www.dentalhealth.org for ideas).</p>	
	<p>Singing songs, counting or reciting the alphabet can be useful distractions but also help the child to see there is an end to the activity</p>	
	<p>Use reward charts, stickers and certificates to award achievements however small they may be</p>	
	<p>Consider if your child does not like the taste of the toothpaste. Use mild or unflavoured toothpaste e.g. Oranurse</p>	

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	Experiment with using cold or warm water to see which one your child prefers.	
Child does not clean their teeth for the desired 2 minutes.	Use an egg timer or toothbrushing app to time brushing for two minutes 