

STRATEGIES TO HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH SENSORY CHALLENGES

SENSORY CHALLENGE: DAILY LIVING SKILLS



Poor Tolerance for Tooth Brushing

INSTRUCTIONS:

- The **Does Your Child?** Section offers educational information about characteristics of children with the above mentioned sensory/behavior challenge. Your child may present with one or many of these characteristics.
- The **Try This!** section offers simple strategies for helping your child cooperate and develop skills. Not all suggestions are appropriate for every child and family. Only use strategies that apply to your child's age, developmental level, and situation. It is suggested to use this checklist while consulting with a professional who has explained and is monitoring these strategies.

>>> Does Your Child?

- Refuse to allow a toothbrush into his/her mouth.
- Gag or show other physical reactions to tooth brushing.

>>> Try This!

- Consider the qualities when selecting a toothbrush your child may tolerate. You may need to experiment with toothbrushes of different sizes, bristle firmness, handles, and colors before you find the one that suits your child.
- A battery or electric toothbrush that has a slight vibration may be preferred by your child.
- Consider the taste of the toothpaste. Try altering the brand, use less, or start without using any toothpaste.
- If a toothbrush is not at all accepted, you may need to start by helping him/ her wipe their teeth clean using a damp washcloth.

PREPARATION BEFORE TOOTH BRUSHING:

- Provide deep touch beginning with the child's arms and legs, and progressing towards the face and mouth.
- Tap the child's gums firmly from center to each side on the upper and lower gums.
- Attempt to desensitize your child's face, lips, and inner mouth for the tooth brushing. While your child is looking into the mirror or at your face, use a soft washcloth to firmly rub his/her cheekbones, borders of the nose, cheeks, chin, and lips. Do this using firm pressure and in a predictable manner. Do this in the same order each day. Finally, place a portion of a damp, slightly warm washcloth into his/her mouth. Encourage him/her to bite down on it while you gently tug on it as tolerated.

RECOMMENDED TOOTH BRUSHES:

- Oral Swabs
- NUK Toothbrush
- Infa-Dent Finger Toothbrush
- Electric Toothbrush
- Suction Toothbrush
- Soft Child's Bristle Toothbrush

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»» Try This!

TOOTH BRUSHING TECHNIQUES:

- To help your child understand the duration of the tooth brushing try one of the following:
 - Sing a familiar short song throughout the process. When the song is over, the tooth brushing ends.
 - Use a sand timer to indicate when tooth brushing will end.
 - Count to a specified number each time they brush. Once that number is reached, tooth brushing is over.
- Experiment with different water temperatures when brushing his/her teeth. Warm, rather than cold water may be better tolerated.
- Experiment with different ways to complete the actual brushing.
- Allow your child to hold the toothbrush while you gently guide his/her hand as tolerated.
- He/ she may allow you to help brush if you stand behind your child while he is looking into the mirror.
- Your child may not tolerate any help and insist on brushing independently (yet briefly). While this may result in his/her teeth not being thoroughly clean, your child's skill should gradually improve.