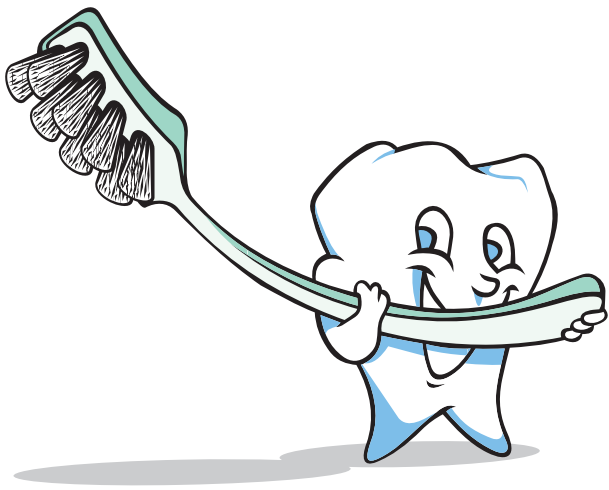


What *Can I Try?*

- ✓ Use a toothbrush with soft bristles
- ✓ Use a smaller toothbrush, such as toddler or child size toothbrush to make access easier
- ✓ Try a battery-operated toothbrush for stimulating gums and ease of tooth brushing
- ✓ Use a timer when brushing to show them when they can stop brushing
- ✓ Use favorite music during brushing. Turn music on only when brush is in mouth
- ✓ Use first-then “first brush, then _____” (favorite activity)
- ✓ Use an activity schedule to show when brushing occurs and what favorite activity comes next



Resources

- ✓ **Florida Dental Association:** Dentists Care Project (850) 681-3629 ext. 304 <http://www.floridadental.org>
- ✓ **National Oral Health Information Clearinghouse:** <http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/OralHealth/OralHealthInformation/SpecialNeeds/>
- ✓ **Shining Smiles:** <http://www.ada.org/public/education/teachers/smiles/smarts/shining.asp>
- ✓ **Kids Dental Health:** http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/stay_healthy/body/teeth.html
- ✓ **Child Dental Health:** <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/childdentalhealth.html>



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For more information or to order additional copies visit <http://ffccic.org>

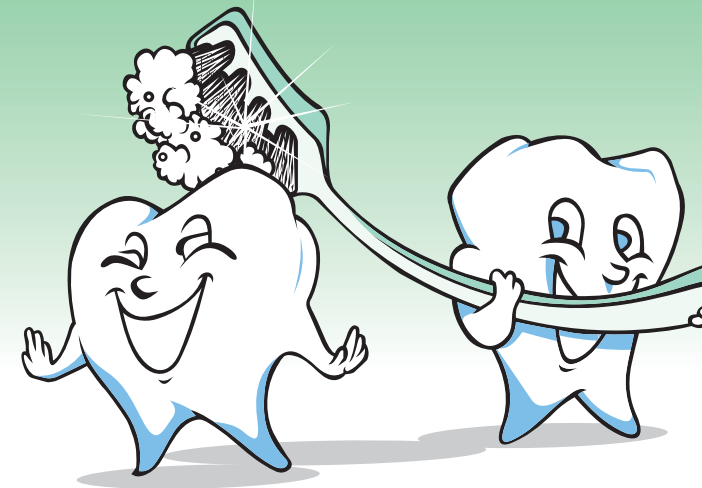


A Behavioral-Health Information Program

for Children and Adults with Disabilities

Mouth Matters:

Oral Health for People with Disabilities



Oral Well-Being

Why is Oral Health *So Difficult?*

Many children and adults with disabilities:

- ✓ Don't like to brush, because their mouth and gums are especially sensitive
- ✓ Are scared of new settings and experiences
- ✓ Do not have health insurance that pays for regular dental care or a dentist who will accept Medicaid

Certain disabilities are at particular risk for dental problems (for example, Down Syndrome and Cerebral Palsy)

Why is Oral Health *Important?*

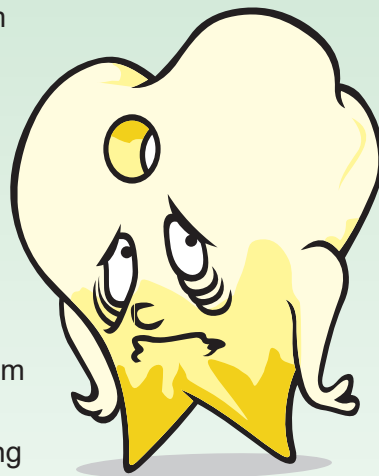
Good oral health is important for:

- ✓ Preventing tooth decay and gum disease
- ✓ Speaking clearly
- ✓ Eating many foods
- ✓ Being accepted socially and working
- ✓ Having a positive self image

What is the *Worst* That Can Happen?

Poor oral health can cause:

- ✓ Tooth decay, gum disease and/or bad breath
- ✓ Severe pain and irritability
- ✓ Bone loss from gum disease
- ✓ Early tooth loss from decay or gum disease
- ✓ Problems chewing and swallowing
- ✓ Infection that can spread to other parts of the body, including the heart



And:

- ✓ Poor self esteem and social rejection because of appearance or bad breath
- ✓ Behavior problems due to pain or resulting social rejection
- ✓ Problems paying attention and learning at home, at school, or on the job

How do I *Support* Good Oral Health?

- ✓ Teach good brushing habits starting at a young age.
- ✓ Be a role model for healthy habits.
- ✓ Brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
- ✓ Floss daily.
- ✓ Visit the dentist at least once a year (every 6 months is best).
- ✓ Get new toothbrushes every 6 months and after your child is sick.

How can my Dentist Help?

- ✓ Allow extra time for appointment
- ✓ Work slowly
- ✓ Break down the procedure for the patient and show, tell, and do each step;
- ✓ Use simple language but speak to patient (not caregiver) as much as possible
- ✓ Take breaks, as needed, and praise cooperation
- ✓ Allow patients to stay in their wheel chair if they prefer
- ✓ Consider beginning with a short appointment and gradually building up treatment time