Learning to Brush Your Teeth

Helping your son/daughter learn how to brush his/her teeth is an important step toward keeping his/her mouth and body healthy. Below are some helpful Do’s and Don’ts in teaching your son/daughter how to brush his/her teeth. There are also helpful tips for how to help your son/daughter brush properly and regularly.

**DO**

- Explain the good things about brushing his/her teeth. You should also explain what can happen if your son/daughter does not brush his/her teeth.

- Understand that your son/daughter might not be open to the idea of brushing his/her teeth on his/her own. But, your son/daughter will most likely listen if you encourage him/her to do so.

- Brush your teeth with your son/daughter. This way, you can model good brushing habits. Your son/daughter can also follow your steps.

- Break down each step into 1 simple sentence. This makes each step easier to remember.

- Watch your son/daughter brush his/her teeth 2 times a day for at least 1 month. This can help you make sure he/she is brushing properly an regularly.

- Use a timer or sing a song for 2 minutes. This helps your son/daughter learn how long he/she should brush his/her teeth. If your son/daughter likes electric toothbrushes, find one with a timer.

- Find a toothbrush and toothpaste that your son/daughter likes. Let him/her pick the color of the toothbrush and flavor of the toothpaste. Start with regular toothbrushes. Then, you can try electric toothbrushes if you can.

- If your son/daughter doesn’t like how the toothbrush feels in his/her mouth, start off slowly. Have your son/daughter practice touching the toothbrush to his/her lips or front teeth. Over time, he/she will get used to the toothbrush.

- When your son/daughter has learned how to brush, then you can talk about flossing. If he/she doesn’t like regular floss, try a floss pick or a water flosser.

**DON’T**

- Don’t use negative language. You can say something like “All done, please turn off the water.” Don’t say something like, “Stop wasting water. Turn off the faucet.”

**Helpful videos on brushing your teeth**

- [This is the way we brush our teeth](https://goo.gl/HYfZWN)
- [Elmo’s teeth brushing video](https://goo.gl/389DyC)
- [ToothTalkTV®: How to Brush Your Teeth Properly](https://goo.gl/r2Oui6)
- [Brushing your teeth: How, why and when?](https://goo.gl/v7QCdN)

**Handouts and social stories to learn about brushing your teeth**

- [How to prepare for a dentist visit](https://www.massgeneralforchildren.org/down-syndrome-dentist-visit) (from the Down Syndrome Program at MGH/IGHC)
- [I Can Brush My Teeth](https://goo.gl/iTMrt7) (from Autism Adventures®)
- [Healthy Smiles® packet](https://www.massgeneralforchildren.org/down-syndrome-dentist-visit) (from Healthy Smiles for Autism®)