

# 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 and 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 (from the Down Syndrome Program at MGH/MGHfC)**  
[www.massgeneralforchildren.org/down-syndrome-dentist-visit](http://www.massgeneralforchildren.org/down-syndrome-dentist-visit)
- **I Can Brush My Teeth (from Autism Adventures®)**  
<https://goo.gl/iTMrt7>
- **Healthy Smiles® packet (from Healthy Smiles for Autism®)**