autism wellbeing

Top Tips for Brushing Teeth: Step by Step

Use toothpaste on a finger to start with. It has a lighter massaging effect on the teeth and gums.

Step up to a 'baby finger tooth brush' and then later a more traditional style of brush.

Choose a tooth brush that suits the individual's sensory profile, try different types and hardness of bristle.

Oranurse has low foam and flavour toothpaste and there are a number of brands offering alternatives to mint.

Try brushing with warmer water, cold water can make your teeth feel sensitive.

Where the person is able to brush their own teeth this is preferable as they are less likely to trigger a gag/vomit reflex. An adult brushing a child's teeth may not be aware of how easily triggered a child's gag reflex is.

Don't put any pressure on the person.

Do not suddenly surprise them - give them a chance to prepare themselves for what is coming.

If the sight of the toothbrush itself makes the person fearful, then step away from that for now.

Brushing in front of the mirror may help the person have more of a sense of what is going to happen as it happens, especially if they struggle with low sensation in the mouth or are over responsive to tactile input in the mouth. But it may be distracting and distressing for some people and they may struggle with coordination or recognizing themselves in a mirror.

Some people need intense flavour but some find the mint sensation cold and burning.

Ideas and resources for making it a fun activity:

Banana silicone baby tooth brush
https://www.amazon.co.uk/Baby-Banana-Teething-Toothbrush-Infants/dp/B002QYW8LW

Crayola squeeze a colour toothpaste
https://www.amazon.co.uk/Crayola-Squeeze-Color-Toothpaste-3-1-5oz/dp/B00EPINBCW

You can get singing toothbrushes or ones with flashing lights and toothbrushes of different sizes.

Bamboo toothbrushes make less of a squeak than plastic ones.

Three-sided toothbrushes that clean a larger area are available. They a bigger but you can brush for less time.