autism wellbeing

Top Tips for Brushing Teeth: Information

Why do some autistic people hate brushing their teeth?

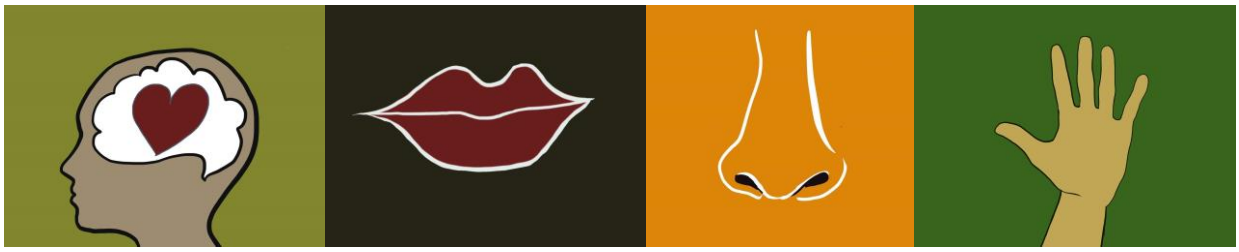
Atypical sensory processing can mean that people find some things uncomfortable, scary or painful that most people do not.

Atypical sensory processing can be a barrier to being able to maintain good dental hygiene.

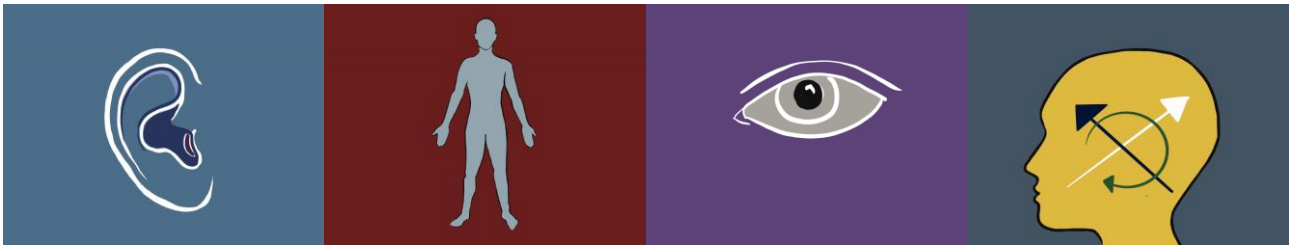
One activity that many autistic people struggle with is tooth brushing.

Many may be over responsive to the sensation in their mouths. They may find the touch and feel of the toothbrush and paste in their mouths uncomfortable or painful. This can be described as oral defensiveness or having high oral sensitivity.

Others are under-responsive to input in their mouths (tactile and proprioceptive) and they may not be able to register the sensation within their mouths, may feel alarmed by the lack of sensation and knowledge of where the toothbrush is when it is in their mouth.



Although we may think of our mouths when we consider the sensory aspects of brushing our teeth, all of our other senses are involved too!

Brushing our teeth is a very complex activity that involves a lot of sudden sensory processing taking place. It requires coordination and complex levels of understanding to know why we are doing it and when.

Regulating our senses before we start is essential – for everyone involved.