

Sensory Strategies for Tooth Brushing

If your child is sensitive to touch, they may dislike the feeling of a toothbrush inside of their mouth. Thus, when faced with the task of brushing their teeth, they may become upset or distressed before or during this task. You can try a variety of strategies to help your child prepare for and get used to the feeling of brushing their teeth.

GENERAL TOOTH BRUSHING STRATEGIES FOR ORAL SENSITIVITY

- Try using a washcloth to wipe the inside of your child's mouth before using a toothbrush
- Try using a Nuk toothbrush before a regular bristled toothbrush
- Soft bristles are easier to tolerate vs. harder bristles, so try a soft bristle toothbrush first!
- Try a vibrating toothbrush, as your child may like the sensation and find it soothing
- If your child will tolerate it, prior starting your tooth brushing routine massage your child around their mouth area from the cheeks towards the lips to prepare for teeth brushing

ADDITIONAL SENSORY STRATEGIES FOR TOOTH BRUSHING

- If your child likes deep pressure, give them bear hugs or squeezes, or have them give themselves a big hug before attempting to brush their teeth
- Your child can tense up like a statue or push on a doorframe and then release to calm themselves prior to tooth brushing
- Your child can practice pushing their lips together and then releasing to prepare for tooth brushing
(Henry, Kate-Windland & Swinderland, 2007; Aquilla, Sutton & Yack, 2003)

These strategies can be compiled into a Sensory Story, which demonstrates these strategies in an easy to read story that your child can understand.

A Sensory Story can be provided to you by your occupational therapist! *(Marr & Nackley, 2006)*