**Sensory Strategies – Teeth Brushing**

Sensory Strategies

* If your child is very sensitive, consider using a flannel to wipe the teeth.
* To decrease sensitivity, apply pressure to the teeth and gums.
* Try different toothpaste; mild, flavourless and foamless for children that are sensitive to taste and texture.
* Promote balance by standing behind your child to secure his body.
* Try an electric toothbrush – the vibration may be calming.
* Try joint compression to the head, neck and shoulders in preparation for
* teeth brushing.
* There are a variety of different toothbrushes for different needs—multi-angled heads, finger brush, 360 brushes, long-handled toothbrush and different bristles.
* Musical toothbrushes may help to soothe your child when brushing their teeth and are a good way to stick to 2 minutes of brushing.
* Allow your child to decide whether they prefer to stand up or sit down when brushing their teeth.
* Counting the number of strokes to use when cleaning their teeth, and separating the mouth into areas that need to be cleaned (15 brushes top back left, 15 top front etc). A picture of an open mouth will help to make this more visual for them to follow.
* The action of cleaning the teeth could be practised by painting the outside of a potato with an old toothbrush so that the motor skill can be learned, and they can see what they are doing. This also encourages them to brush for longer periods.

**Other Strategies**

• Encourage frequent water drinking to remove extra food.

• Try a footstool to help your child reach the basin.

• Facilitate independence in children with fine motor difficulties by using

toothpaste in a pump dispenser.

* Try using reward charts. Rewarding a sticker for every independent attempt.
* Try having set times to brush their teeth using a routine chart.
* There are a variety of timing devises available to encourage 2-minute brushing. Or try an app, song or YouTube video.
* Encourage your child to use a mirror when brushing their teeth so they can see what they are doing.

**Ideas for Self Help Skills - for children with sensory issues**

Adapted from ‘Building Bridges through Sensory Integration’ by Ellen Youch,

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