



Taking Care of Your Teeth and Gums:

Dentistry for Individuals with Disabilities.



Presented by the
Consumer Caucus
of the
New York State
Developmental Disabilities Planning Council

Aldea LaParr
Chairperson

This pamphlet is one in a series on oral health needs of individuals with disabilities. It is intended to help individuals with disabilities learn to brush their teeth so that they will have healthy teeth and gums. It was developed for all individuals with disabilities, their caregivers, dental professionals, and medical professionals associated with good oral health care.

New York State
Developmental Disabilities Planning Council
155 Washington Ave.
Albany, NY 12210

Phone: 518-486-7505
Fax: 518-402-3505
www.ddpc.state.ny.us

What is Oral Health Care?

Oral health care means taking care of your mouth, including your teeth, gums, and jaws.

To have a healthy mouth means brushing 2 or 3 times a day, flossing once a day, and visiting a dentist every 3 to 4 months.

This pamphlet will show you how to brush and floss your teeth and tell you about a visit to the dentist.

Where is the best place to brush and floss my teeth?



The bathroom is the place where many people brush and floss their teeth.



The kitchen or dining room may be more comfortable because you can sit at the table.

What is the best way to brush my teeth?



Use a toothbrush with soft bristles.



Put some water on the toothbrush.



Use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste with fluoride each time you brush.



Make sure to brush the top, back, and sides of each tooth.



Brush in a circular motion, brushing both teeth and gums.



Remember to brush your tongue.

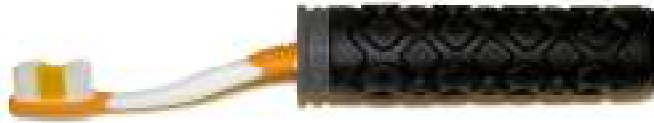


Say “patooy” to spit the toothpaste into the sink.

What if the toothbrush handle is too small for me to hold?

If the toothbrush handle is too small for you to hold, try these ideas.





Push the handle into a bicycle grip to make the handle larger.



An electric toothbrush has a larger handle and may make brushing easier.

What else can I do to take care of my teeth?

Besides brushing, you should floss your teeth every day.



Flossing helps to clean the teeth in hard to reach spaces, such as between your teeth.



One way to floss is to hold the floss between the thumb and index finger of each hand.



Another way to floss is to wrap a piece of floss about 18 inches long, or as long as your arm, around the middle finger of each hand.



Start by flossing the lower front teeth.



Curve the floss around each tooth.

Carefully work the floss back and forth.

Slide it up and down the tooth to the gumline. Floss under the gum too.

Adjust the floss as you move around your mouth so the floss is clean for each tooth.



Floss between the upper front teeth.

Floss both sides of every tooth, one side at a time, one jaw at a time.



If using the fingers is a problem, try using a floss holder instead.

I may need help with brushing and flossing. What should I do?

Ask your caregiver to help you brush and floss your teeth.



Have your caregiver stand in front of you and brush and floss your teeth while you smile.

What do I need to know about the dental visit?

You should visit a dentist every 3 to 4 months.



The dentist will have you sit in a dentist's chair.



The dentist will shine a light on your teeth to examine them.



The dentist will let you wear sunglasses if the bright light bothers your eyes.



The dentist will use instruments to check your teeth.



The dentist will check your teeth for cavities.



The dentist will take x-rays to see hidden cavities.



The dentist can show you how to brush your teeth.



The dentist will also clean your teeth using instruments.



The dentist will have you spit in a basin.

Is there anything else I should know?



Make each visit to the dentist a pleasant one so you will want to come back.



It may take awhile to get used to taking care of your teeth, but having good oral health care habits makes a great smile.

References:

National Institute of Dental & Craniofacial Research, *Dental Care Every Day: A Caregiver's Care Every Day: Caregiver's Guide*. Retrieved on November 13, 2007 from <http://www.nider.nih.gov/nider.nih.gov/>

Images:

Photo.com

The New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (NYSDDPC) distributes this information in good faith that it is accurate and current. It should not be considered complete or exhaustive, nor does it cover all conditions and disorders, and their treatment and other oral health-related issues. You should not use this pamphlet as a means of diagnosing oral health conditions or as a means of determining treatment. The information in this pamphlet is designed to inform you about oral health care. It is not intended to be a replacement for information provided by your dentist and doctor. This information should not be used in place of a phone call to your doctor or dentist. In the event of an emergency, please contact your doctor or dentist right away or call 911.

©2009 NYS Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC) gives permission to freely reproduce this document if it is copied and provided without alteration in its entirety.