Establishing a Dental Hygiene Routine with Your Child

The purpose of this resource is to assist parents and caregivers in establishing a dental hygiene routine with their children. It is important to brush twice a day, once in the morning and once at bedtime.

START EARLY

Establishing dental care as a natural part of the daily routine will make the task much easier.

REDUCE ANXIETY

Choose a soothing place to brush that does not have excessive or harsh lighting. Make the experience as pleasant as possible by incorporating songs and toys. Make up toothbrushing songs to familiar tunes. Use the child's favorite toys to soothe during toothbrushing or to show the process.

TOOLS

If your child is resistant to toothbrushing, try changing the toothbrush or toothpaste. An electric toothbrush may be helpful. If all else fails, try a warm washcloth. Children's toothpastes are often less intense in flavor than adult toothpastes. Try various flavors to find one the child can tolerate. If the child cannot tolerate toothpaste, brushing with water alone is better than not brushing at all!

TASK ANALYSIS

Break a simple task like toothbrushing into smaller component steps. Once you have identified the steps, instruct the child one step at a time. This process is known as "forward chaining." Reward the child by praising them for each step they can perform on his own. Click here for more information about teaching new skills.

PICTURE CUES AND SOCIAL STORY

Take photos of yourself or your child during each step of the toothbrushing process. Use the photos to tell your child the story or process of toothbrushing. Read this story to your child every day.

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