

# Learning Together



## Specialized Services at Your Fingertips

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### Introduction

Who amongst us has not felt that sense of dread when a visit to the dentist is imminent? Even simple checkups can be uncomfortable and mildly painful. One part of that experience is knowing that the dentist will invariably ask the question....do you floss regularly? We even get that little grab bag with all the tools necessary to complete our dental hygiene routine. The dentist is very concerned about our teeth and so should we. In this issue we cover what may happen with poor hygiene habits. The types of behaviour you may observe when individuals are in pain but unable to report the source and of course we provide strategies from daily care to visits to the dentist. We had the opportunity to interview a dental hygienist who provides mobile care for individuals with a developmental disability. Josie has a wealth of experience providing care in all sorts of environments with mild to severe challenging behaviour. [Interview](#).

### How Dental Health Effects the Body

There are many different ways that dental health can effect the body and it's wellbeing. Sometimes the mouth can be thought of as a different entity from the body as we go to the dentist for our mouth, and the doctor for our body. This separation can cause people to disregard the importance of dental hygiene and how it is connected to many systems in the body.

**Heart disease, stroke, respiratory disorders, diabetes** are all related to oral health. The mouth is an opening in our body where bacteria enter leading to **cavities, gum disease** and untreated **tooth decay**. These bacteria can get into the blood stream and can travel to different parts of the body and multiple organs. This can cause multiple health conditions. It is important to keep up the proper dental hygiene and preventative dental work to keep our teeth clean and healthy.

For additional resources on the health implications of dental health [visit this link](#) by the College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario.

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### Behaviours Related to Dental Problems

Going to the dentist can be anxiety producing for most of us, more so for individuals with developmental disabilities. Even the participation in dental hygiene routines can be difficult for those with developmental disabilities. Over time improper care or monitoring can potentially lead to poor oral health with the most common dental problems being cavities, gingivitis, and periodontal disease.

Dental problems not only can drastically effect for physical health, as we already discussed, but also cause a great deal of discomfort and pain. This discomfort and pain can lead to an increase in challenging behaviours, especially if the individual is unable to communicate there is a problem and the pain goes untreated.



MY REACTION WHEN MY DENTIST



ASKS IF I'VE BEEN FLOSSIN

Potential behaviours related to dental problem:

- **Moodiness**
- **Irritability**
- **Vocalizations of distress or pain**
- **Crying**
- **Facial tension**
- **Sleep issues**
- **Loss of appetite**
- **Increase in self-injury** (especially to the mouth or jaw)

## Task Analysis for Teeth Brushing

A great tool caregivers can use to teach teeth brushing is a task analysis. A **task analysis** is the process of breaking a skill down into smaller, more manageable steps and then using it to teach the individual that specific skill. This is useful when the skill is too challenging for the individual to teach all at once.

To learn more information on task analysis please visit [ConnectAbility](#) or the [September 2020 Newsletter Edition](#).

To teach a loved one how to brush their teeth or increase independence it is first important to prepare all necessary materials. Ensure you have all items needed to complete the task, i.e. toothbrush, toothpaste, water cup, etc. Ensure that these items are easily accessible for the learner to identify and access. The next steps will be to break down each step into component parts.

If your goal is to teach how to brush teeth, begin with developing a task analysis. Your task analysis is a descriptive list of each action that is necessary to complete to brush your teeth. It is helpful when developing a task analysis to act out these actions yourself and document. It is

also, important to take into consideration the person's own natural routine; do they prefer to wet the toothbrush before toothpaste? After toothpaste? Not at all? Here is an example of a teeth brushing task analysis.

STEPS	
1.	Walk to bathroom
2.	Take toothbrush
3.	Turn on tap
4.	Place bristles of toothbrush under running water
5.	Turn off tap
6.	Take toothpaste
7.	Unscrew the cap
8.	Hold opening of toothpaste above bristles
9.	Apply medium pressure to tube to dispense product
10.	Apply a pea size amount of toothpaste to bristles
11.	Replace cap toothpaste tube
12.	Place toothbrush in mouth
13.	Brush bottom right for _____ seconds
14.	Brush bottom left for _____ seconds
15.	Brush top right for _____ seconds
16.	Brush top left for _____ seconds
17.	Spit/rinse out mouth with water
18.	Rinse toothbrush
19.	Replace all items back to original spot

If your goal is to work towards desensitization of toothbrushing, it can be helpful to use timers.

Using the task analysis above, set the timer for a realistic goal of time spent brushing teeth. Remember to set **SMART** goals: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-based. Start small and work your way towards the bigger, overarching goal - 2 minutes brushing teeth. Start the timer right when the individual places the toothbrush in their mouth. If they are successful, provide positive social praise! Then using full physical prompting brush each quadrant of the person's mouth, one by one.

Ensure you are counting **out loud** to 5 for each section and repeat until the timer goes off. Once the timer goes off, reinforce immediately with the identified preferred items along with specific verbal praise, "I love how you brushed your teeth!". If the person brushes their teeth but not for the set amount of time, provide verbal praise and withhold reinforcement for instances where the person refuses to brush their teeth.

If your goal is to increase independence in teeth brushing, try out the following:

1. Select an SD, a verbal queue, like “It’s time to brush your teeth”. It’s key that you use the same prompt each time you initiate the teeth brushing.
2. Allow the learner time to respond, i.e. 5 seconds.
3. If unresponsive to the verbal queue, prompt from behind the learner with the least amount of physical prompting necessary to obtain the correct response.
4. Repeat this step as necessary throughout the sequence
5. Provide the learner to respond to physical prompting and initiate task
6. Provide specific verbal praise for successful completion of each step and once the task is complete

## Preparing for the Dentist

- If possible, take **pictures** of the **building** inside and outside
- **Model** what the dentist may do (have the individual lie back and open their mouth), if possible, use dental tools to **demonstrate** (see Dental Toolkit link)
- If possible, take a **picture** of the dentist to help individual remember
- Create a **social story and/or visual schedule**- review what to expect with the individual
- Attach a **reinforcer**- use first/then to motivate the individual i.e. first dentist, then park. Ensure the reinforcer is **highly preferred** (use Preference Assessment Tool)
- **Comfort items**- picture, toy etc. encourage the individual to bring along a personal item that they find comforting
- **Incorporate breaks**- individual may require breaks during the appointment, this should be communicated to the dentist prior to the appointment
- Inform dentist of any **sensitivities/potential issues**
- Ensure the person accompanying the individual to the appointment is **comfortable** with the situation i.e. **familiar** with the individual and their needs, remains **calm**
- If a medical **PRN** is required for the appointment, ensure to administer it as instructed for maximum effect
- Provide the dentist with a list of the individuals’ **current medications** and any **known allergies**

### Additional resources:

- [Dental guide](#)
- [Dental Toolkit](#)

For feedback or questions please email us at: [specservicesnews@cltoronto.ca](mailto:specservicesnews@cltoronto.ca)



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## HOW DO YOU ACCESS FUNDING FOR DENTAL SERVICES?



### CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Children with Disabilities and low income families can apply for Healthy Smiles Ontario (HSO), a Government funded dental plan. The link for more information is here:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-dental-care#section-3>

### ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES

Adults (age 18-65) with disabilities can apply for the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), a Government funded support program that covers many areas of health needs as well as dental treatment. The link for more information is here:

[https://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/en/mcass/programs/social/odsp/income\\_support/part\\_one.aspx](https://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/en/mcass/programs/social/odsp/income_support/part_one.aspx)



### SENIORS WITH DISABILITIES

Seniors with disabilities can apply for Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program (OSDCP), a government funded program specifically for dental coverage. The link for more information is here:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/dental-care-low-income-seniors>

