

# A caregiver's guide to oral health:

## For children with intellectual and developmental disabilities



Your child needs a healthy mouth to reach their full potential! Children with dental decay may have problems eating, sleeping and learning. Plus, infection in the mouth can spread through the body, causing medical issues.

### Daily Oral Health Care



**Infants:** Wipe gums with a clean, damp washcloth twice a day.



**First tooth–3 years:** Brush twice a day with an infant toothbrush and a smear of children's fluoride toothpaste.



**3+ years:** Brush twice a day using a pea-size amount of children's fluoride toothpaste.



As soon as two or more teeth are touching, floss once a day.

### Tips for Toothbrushing



Brush teeth when and where your child feels most comfortable.



Distract your child with a short video, music, or their favorite toy.



Brush in five-second increments with breaks in between.



## Finding a Dentist

Children should see a pediatric dentist by their first birthday and at least twice a year after that. To find one, contact your family dentist, insurance company, or go to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry website ([www.aapd.org/finddentist](http://www.aapd.org/finddentist)).



Talk to the office in advance about your child's needs.



Ask for a pre-appointment visit to help your child get comfortable.



Bring any questions you have about your child's oral health.

## Navigating Common Challenges



**Sugary liquid medications:** Ask your pharmacist for sugar-free alternatives.



**Breathing or feeding equipment:** Clean regularly.



**Sensory concerns:** Brush in a calm setting, let your child choose their own toothbrush and toothpaste, and follow a routine.



**Dry mouth or mouth breathing:** Let your child sip water often.



**Food pouching (keeping food between teeth and cheek):** Use a clean, damp washcloth to clear your child's mouth. If your child is able, have them rinse their mouth with water.

**Valuable tools and resources:** Help your child prepare for their dentist visit by downloading the [All Smiles Shine](#) app from the Google Play or Apple store.