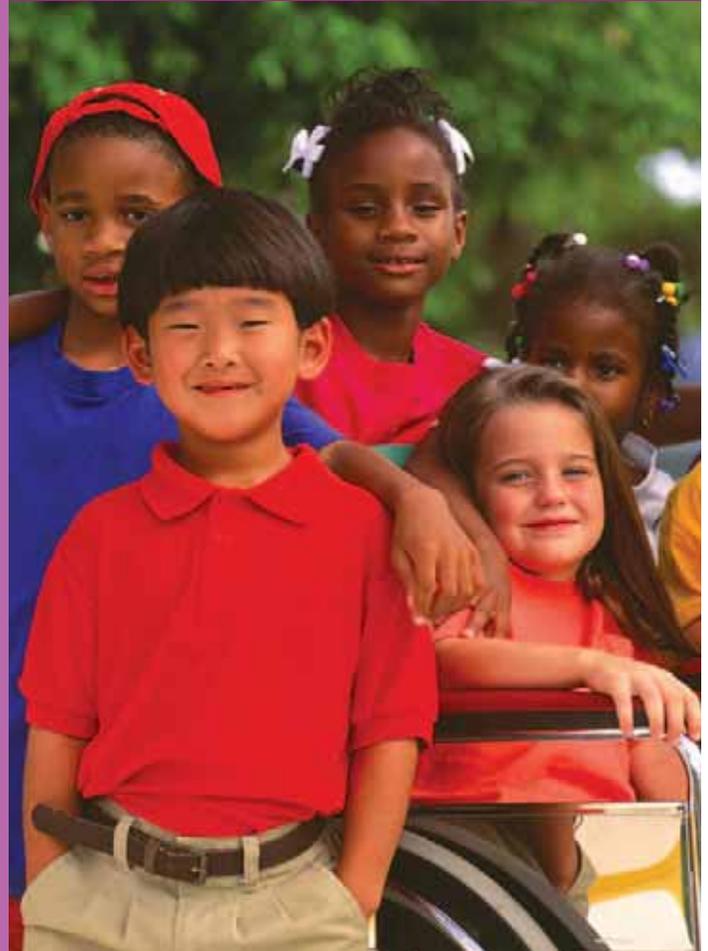


Oral Care for Special People

Samuels Sinclair Dental Center



Rhode Island Hospital

A Lifespan Partner

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Rhode Island Hospital

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Advancing Medicine. Touching Lives.

Just the basics – Brush, rinse, floss

Mastering these basics is key to keeping a healthy mouth and a beautiful smile — but it takes practice.

We know that for someone with special needs, it will take some assistance.

Here are some step-by-step directions to help your special someone.

Brushing

Rule Number One: Everyone should brush twice a day for the best oral health.

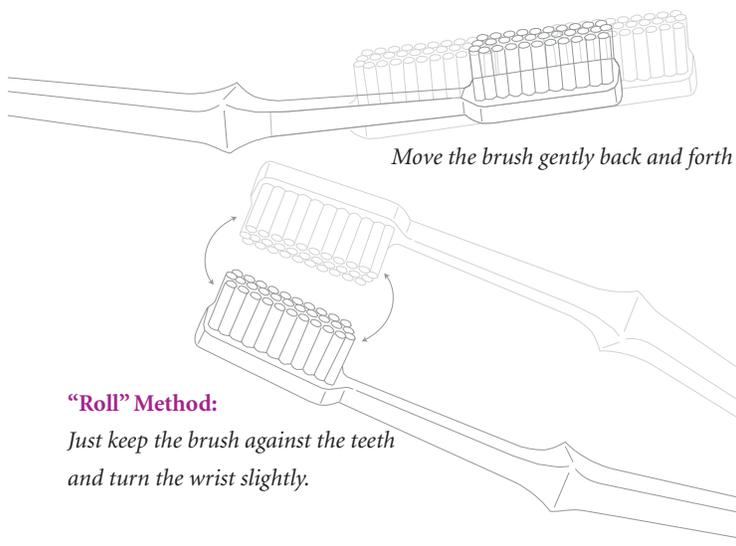
Using a soft-bristle toothbrush

Put the toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to the gums and use a vibrating or jiggling stroke. Move the brush **gently back and forth**. Brush all of the teeth—upper and lower, cheek side, tongue side and biting surface.

If that way of brushing is too difficult, try the “**roll**” **method**: Just keep the brush against the teeth and turn the wrist slightly.

Or try the “**circular**” **method**. With the teeth closed, place the brush inside the cheek, with the tips of the bristles lightly touching the teeth. Try making quick, wide circles with the brush.

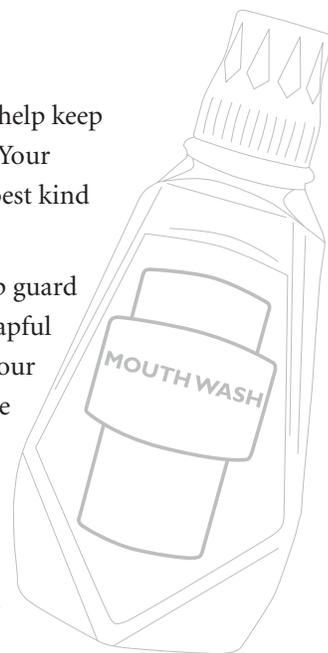
And don't forget the **tongue**: Be gentle, but brush it lightly to keep the breath fresh.



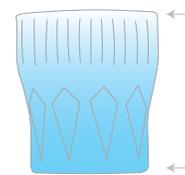
Rinsing

There are special rinses to help keep teeth and mouths healthy. Your dentist will show you the best kind of rinse.

- A **fluoride rinse** will help guard against cavities. Take a capful and swish it around in your mouth for 60 seconds. Be careful not to swallow it. After you spit out the rinse, don't eat, drink or rinse for 30 minutes. This will really help protect your teeth.



- **If that seems too hard to do ...** just brush your teeth with a toothbrush or cotton swab that has been dipped in the rinse. Do this after you have brushed your teeth with toothpaste.



Take a capful and swish it around in your mouth for 60 seconds.

Flossing

Flossing is important, but it can be a little difficult to manage without help.

Start off with a piece of floss about 18 inches long, and wrap each end around the middle finger of each hand.

Curve the floss into a C shape around each tooth and slide it up and down gently. You want to dislodge any food or plaque that's caught between the teeth.



Floss Holders

Floss holders can be a big help if floss is hard to handle. Your dentist will show you how to use a floss holder.

Special help for special people — toothbrushes

There are ways to adapt a toothbrush to make brushing much easier.

Have you tried an **electric toothbrush**? Usually the larger handle is easier to grip, and the gentle vibration action is just right to clean the teeth without hurting the mouth or gums.

Sometimes a **longer handle** is all that's needed. Try taping the toothbrush to a tongue depressor or even a wooden spoon to help lengthen it. To make it **easier to hold onto**, a soft rubber ball or a bicycle handle grip will be a big help.



My special someone needs help. What's the best position for brushing?

Try out several methods to find out which one works best. You want to decide on a method where:

- you will both be comfortable.
- you can make sure you are both secure.
- you can see what you are doing.

Remember: Always make sure the head is supported. Tooth brushing should be a comfortable experience!



If your someone is in a wheelchair ...

Stand or sit behind the wheelchair. You may want to use a pillow for both comfort and security. Use your arm as a brace.



Or sit on a chair behind your someone, who is sitting on the floor ...

Have him or her lean back against your thigh. In case of restlessness, you can put your legs over his or her arms just long enough for the brushing, rinsing and flossing.



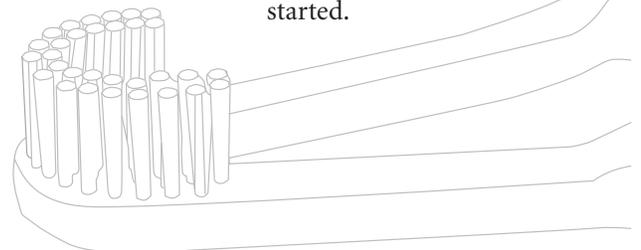
On a bed or sofa ...

Let your someone lie back on the bed or sofa with his or her head in your lap, supporting it with your arm. Sometimes it's a good idea to ask a second person for help in holding hands and feet during the brushing, rinsing and flossing.



In a beanbag chair ...

This is a good alternative for someone who has trouble sitting up straight. It feels more secure than an ordinary sofa or bed. Make sure your someone is reclining in a comfortable but secure position before you get started.



A healthy diet is just as important as brushing

THINK about drinks!

Too many smiles are being ruined by too much sugar. That can mean too much soda, too many sports drinks, even too much fruit juice.

Sugar has a way of sticking to the teeth and destroying the enamel, causing cavities.

Be sure to check labels before buying beverages. Don't buy anything with lots of sugar or high-fructose corn syrup.

Water is wonderful

Offer your special someone lots of water. Even 100 percent fruit juice is better when it's mixed with water to reduce sugar intake a bit further.

It's especially important to avoid candy, chips, gum, cookies — any food high in sugars. This includes "gummy fruit snacks." There is no fruit in this product and it really sticks to the teeth. Good snacks clear easily from the teeth. Anything that **sticks** or **lingers** on the teeth is a **bad snack**.

Good snacks include fresh fruits, vegetables, cheeses, nuts and lowfat yogurt. Serve and enjoy sliced apples, seedless grapes, raw carrots, celery, cheese sticks and popcorn. Frequent snacking and drinking will increase your risk of tooth decay because starches and sugar build up on the teeth.

Try not to use food as a reward for good behavior, unless the reward is a healthy option.

Of course an occasional sweet snack is OK. Just remember to brush afterward, or at least rinse with water for one minute.

Keep an eye out for common dental problems

Cavities

Even with regular brushing, cavities may sometimes develop. It's very important for your dentist to find and treat them,

even in primary teeth, before they become painful or dangerous. A diet high in sugar is a primary cause of cavities.

Dry mouth (xerostomia)

This is a common side effect of some medications. It can also be a symptom of some diseases. It's important to correct dry mouth as soon as possible. Your dentist will help decide what is causing dry mouth in your special someone, and can advise you about over-the-counter mouthwashes or other methods for this condition.

Bleeding gums

Bleeding gums, also known as gingivitis, are a common problem. This condition is caused by plaque and food debris left to collect on teeth and gums. **It will improve only when gums are thoroughly cleaned on a daily basis. If gums bleed, keep gently brushing them. This is the only way to reverse this damaging condition.** The bleeding will slowly subside.

Darkened front tooth

A discolored (darkish or yellowish) front tooth usually means the nerve has been damaged, probably by trauma. You should ask your dentist about any such tooth.

Facial or gum swelling

Swelling is most often caused by an abscessed/infected tooth. Whatever the reason, **you will need to see the dentist as soon as possible.** Facial or gum swelling is the sign of a dental emergency!

It is important to ask a dentist for help if you are experiencing any of these problems.

Contact Us

If you have any questions about the information in this brochure, please contact your dental professional at the Samuels Sinclair Dental Center. Our phone number is 401-444-5284.