

# Supporting Oral Health

## Key Facts

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) are at high risk of dental disease. Poor oral health is associated with chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. Oral disease is also associated with using tobacco and consuming sugary foods and beverages.

People with I/DD should be taught and encouraged to brush their own teeth and gums. Families and support workers may need advice or training on how to support people in the area of dental care.

### Dental Care at Home

A healthy diet is important to good dental care. Avoiding sugary drinks and snacks is important, as well as drinking water after meals.

People with I/DD may need to be shown how to brush their teeth correctly. Some people will need more training than others or to be reminded to brush their teeth regularly. Some people may benefit from a toothbrush with an adapted handle.

Incorrect brushing can cause gum disease. This is painful, and the person may then resist having their teeth and gums brushed. Some people will need family or support workers to brush their teeth and gums. Cleaning someone else's teeth is quite complex and intrusive. It is important to get professional advice on how to do it.



### Tips for Maintaining a Healthy Mouth:

- Brush teeth at least twice a day – morning and night.
- Use an electric toothbrush if possible – it is easier to use and cleans teeth better.
- Use a three-sided toothbrush.
- Brush in small circles along the gum line where the gums and teeth meet.
- Use a small, pea-size amount of toothpaste.
- Use dental floss or interdental brushes.
- Clean dentures after each meal and leave them in water overnight.
- Replace toothbrush or brush heads every 3 months.
- Remember, every person is different and has different needs when it comes to oral health care. Support the person with following their dentist's recommendations.



## For more information:

For More Information:

Oral health information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/index.html>

The American Dental Association Mouth Healthy website: <https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en>

## Related fact sheets:

- Signs of Illness
- Encouraging Preventative Health Care

*This fact sheet was created in June 2021.*

*The fact sheet contains general information only and does not take into account individual circumstances. It should not be relied on for medical advice. We encourage you to review the information in this fact sheet within the context of educational purposes and when appropriate, share it with your health professional to decide whether the information is right for you.*

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