



Aids to help toothbrushing

Every so often people need more support than the standard soft bristle toothbrush. Products are available that can assist with toothbrushing. Sometimes it's just a matter of finding the right one for a particular need.

Effective toothbrushing is important as it can help prevent tooth decay, bad breath, inflammation of the gums and reduce the risk of infection. Available aids to help toothbrushing include:-

Modified toothbrushes

- A soft toothbrush can be bent for better access to the mouth
- Forward bent toothbrush can help with inner surfaces of upper and lower teeth.
- Backward bent toothbrush can be used to pull the cheek away while using another brush to clean the teeth.
- Handgrips and toothbrush adaptors may help carers and those who can brush by themselves but have poor grip or limited movement, e.g. foam rubber handle, tennis ball or commercial adaptors.



Three-sided toothbrush e.g. Collis Curve

- Three-sided toothbrushes are designed to 'hug' the teeth to clean three tooth surfaces and the gumline all at the same time.
- Useful where mouth care is provided by a second person.
- Correct brush size is essential and if unsure, ask a dental practitioner for advice.
- To begin brushing, place the three-sided toothbrush over the top of the lower front teeth. Using a short back and forth motion, gradually progress to the back teeth on one side. Re-position the brush over the lower front teeth and brush to reach the back teeth on the other side. Repeat for the upper teeth.
- If necessary, tilt the brush from side-to-side as you brush, to reach the tooth surface at and below the gum margin. Bleeding gums may occur if this area has not been cleaned well in the past. Bleeding from the gums from brushing should stop after a few days of proper cleaning. If bleeding persists contact a dental practitioner.



Manual and electric three-sided toothbrushes are available on-line or ask your pharmacy, they may be able to order one in for you.

Electric toothbrush

An effective tool if the person can accept the noise and vibration.

- Useful for those who brush by themselves but have limited manual dexterity.
- Where mouth care is provided by a second person, start by introducing the electric brush on the fingers, lips and fleeting touches on the front teeth. Once accepted by the person, complete toothbrushing.

Interproximal brush

Ideal for cleaning large 'gaps' between teeth and ...

- Areas where food gets caught.
- Hard to reach and clean areas e.g. underneath dental bridges.
- In between tooth roots where gum has been lost.

Your dental practitioner may advise of other between teeth aides such as flossettes



Suction toothbrush e.g. Plak-Vak

Suitable for brushing teeth for people who are unconscious, tube fed or have swallowing problems.

- Used in conjunction with either a portable pump or wall suction.

It is important for teeth to be cleaned. People who are non-orally fed or have difficulty swallowing can develop chest infections if plaque (bacteria) is left on their teeth.

Tooth rests and mouth props

Helpful for people who find it difficult to cooperate with unaided mouth opening or for those who are unable to keep their mouth open for long.

- Effective mouth props may include: - a tightly rolled up flannel just dampened, toothbrush with padded handle, padded tongue depressors (no more than 6 taped together), commercial props.
- Mouth props are not suitable for everyone e.g. those who have functional swallowing problems and/or are non-orally fed.



For further advice and support speak to a dental practitioner

Would you like more information or to provide feedback?

This document can be made available in alternative formats such as braille, audio tape or electronically on request.



Communications Officer, Dental Health Services
Locked Bag 15, Bentley Delivery Centre, WA 6983



(08) 9313 0555



publications@dental.health.wa.gov.au



www.dental.wa.gov.au

Any images used in this document are for illustrative purposes only, as they are only offered as a general guide.



HealthyWA
Health information for Western Australians

© 2019 Dental Health Services WA. All rights reserved.