Teeth Brushing- Sensory

Possible Challenges:

Children can excessively dislike and resist teeth cleaning. Young children will need help and it’s not uncommon for toddlers and children with delay to resist. Generally, children will need assistance from an adult to brush their teeth twice a day until age 7. Talk to your health visitor and dentist about oral hygiene.

Helpful Tips:

* Introduce teeth cleaning in pretend play and read toddler books with teeth brushing.
* Watch and copy an adult.
* Let the child hold a toothbrush and use a second brush for cleaning. Use a small headed toothbrush of medium texture.
* Tell the child why it’s important. Consider use of a social story. Use of a tooth brushing song. Stay calm.
* Have fun and use reward charts, stickers, etc.

Preparation for Teeth Brushing:

* An adult can apply deep pressure to the cheeks with both hands-on cheeks before teeth cleaning – blow up cheeks and squash flat. An older child may take on these strategies.
* Play tongue games before brushing – e.g. count teeth on left side with tongue, put tongue in cheek etc
* Use an electrical toothbrush – provides deep pressure and vibration to help calm and organise. Can also be used on cheeks and face before teeth brushing to desensitise.
* General blowing and sucking games during the day – blowing bubbles, party whistles, drinking through a straw

Sensory tips for Teeth Brushing:

* Use a small amount of toothpaste.
* Use of a mirror.
* Try different types of toothbrushes, i.e., finger toothbrush, soft chewable toothbrush, electric toothbrush with small head, timer toothbrush with light
* Try different toothpastes, i.e., flavourless, mild mint, fruit flavoured, bicarbonate of soda-based toothpaste

Things to consider:

* Have a tooth brushing routine and stick to it.
* Consider use of visual symbols to support teeth brushing.
* Consider a timer of any sort and ensure you stop when the timer stops.
* No/ little distraction environment.