

# Healthy Habits for Happy Smiles



## Toothbrushing Positions for Your Child with a Disability

Some children with disabilities need extra help brushing their teeth. There are many ways to position a child for brushing. These may change with a child's age, and they depend on the child's physical or medical condition. Try different positions for brushing your child's teeth to find one that works for your child and you.



*School readiness begins with health!*



Tips for different positions to brush your child's teeth:

- **On the floor.** Place your child on the floor, sitting up. Sit right behind him or her, on a chair or stool. Tip the child's head back into your lap. If your child will not sit still, gently place your legs over your child's arms to keep him or her still. You can also lay your child on the floor, with his or her head on a pillow or on your lap. Kneel or sit behind your child's head. If you need to, use your arm to keep him or her still.
- **In a beanbag chair.** If your child can't sit up, place your child in a beanbag chair. Use the same position described above for sitting on the floor.
- **On a bed or sofa.** Lay your child on a bed or sofa, with his or her head in your lap. Support your child's head and shoulders with your arm. If your child will not stay still, another person can gently hold his or her hands and feet.
- **In a chair or wheelchair.** Stand behind the chair or wheelchair. Use your arm to brace the child's head against the chair or wheelchair or against your body. You can use a pillow to make the child more comfortable. Or, sit behind the chair or wheelchair and tilt it back into your lap. Remember to lock the wheels of the wheelchair.
- **Warning:** Some children make extra saliva during toothbrushing. To prevent the child from choking on saliva, make sure the child's head is not tilted far back. Whichever toothbrushing position you choose, hold the child's head upright or to the side. That will help stop saliva from running down the child's throat. This warning is especially important for children who have a poor swallowing reflex or poor tongue control.



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