



SPECIAL CARE

An Oral Health Professional's Guide to Serving Young Children with Special Health Care Needs

Different Positions for Toothbrushing

There are many ways to position a child for toothbrushing. These may change with a child's age, and they depend on the child's physical or medical conditions.

Remember that supporting the head, making sure that you can see inside the mouth, and making sure that you can easily move the toothbrush are important. To prevent choking or gagging, don't tilt the child's head back. Make sure that you are not triggering any other types of reflexes. This is particularly important in children with cerebral palsy. Work with your child's oral health professional to find the safest, most comfortable position for you and your child.

In a Wheelchair

Method 1. Stand behind the wheelchair. Use your arm to brace the child's head against the wheelchair or against your body. You can use a pillow to make the child more comfortable.



Method 2. Sit behind the wheelchair and tilt it back into your lap. Remember to lock the wheels of the wheelchair.



Sitting on the Floor

Place the child on the floor in a seated position, and sit right behind him, on a chair. Lean the child's head against your knees. If the child is uncooperative, you can gently place your legs over his arms to keep him still.



On a Bed or Sofa

Place the child on a bed or sofa lying down, with his head in your lap. Support his head and shoulders with your arm. If the child is uncooperative, a second person can gently hold his hands and feet.



In a Beanbag Chair

If it is hard for the child to sit up straight, sitting in a beanbag chair may allow her to relax without fear of falling. Use the same position as described above for brushing on a bed or sofa.



Lying on the Floor

Place the child on the floor lying down, with her head on a pillow. Kneel behind the child's head, using your arm to help hold her still, if necessary.

