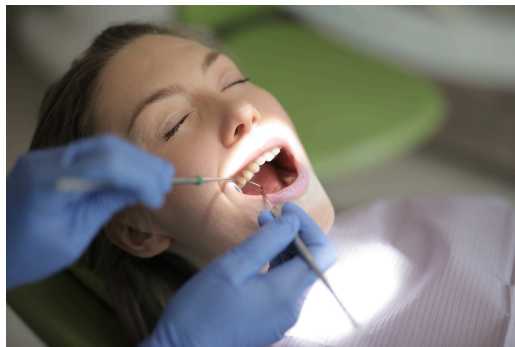


# Supporting Dental Health

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) are at high risk of dental disease. Poor dental 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.



## Dental Care at Home

People with I/DD should be taught and encouraged to brush their own teeth and gums. They may need to be shown how to brush their teeth correctly. Some people will need more training than others and some may benefit from a toothbrush with an adapted handle.

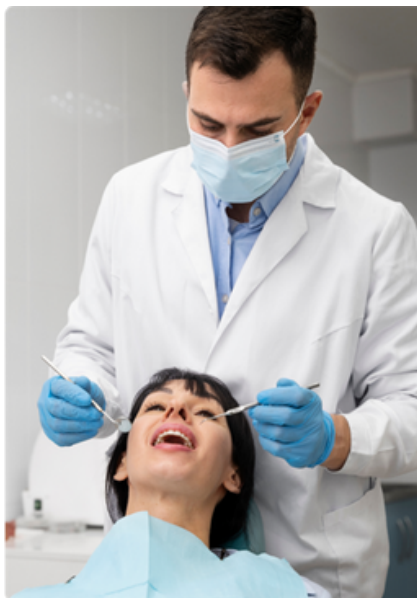
Some people will need family or support workers to brush their teeth and gums. Families and support workers may need advice or training on how to support dental care. Brushing or cleaning someone else's teeth is quite complex and intrusive. It is important to get professional advice on how to do it.



## Going to the Dentist

Going to see a dentist once or twice a year is a good practice to keep healthy teeth and mouth.

The dentist will examine your teeth and gums for cavities and gum disease. This may include an X-ray. Having your teeth cleaned by a professional might be a part of this visit. Special accommodations may be needed for some people.



## 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.
- 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 to get between teeth.
- Replace toothbrush or brush heads every 3 months.
- Clean dentures after each meal and leave them in water overnight.
- Avoid sugary drinks and snacks.
- Drink water after snacks and meals.

Incorrect brushing can cause gum disease. This is painful. The person may then resist having their teeth and gums brushed.

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.



### Resource

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

### Acknowledgement

The Iowa Taking Charge of My Health (TCMH) curriculum, including power points, worksheets and fact sheets is inspired by Oregon’s University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) Taking Charge of my Healthcare Toolkit which can be found at <https://www.ohsu.edu/oregon-office-on-disability-and-health/taking-charge-my-health-care>.

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The information provided is for general use and not medical advice or intended to address any individual situation.

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