



Oral Health for People with IDD

Did you know?

Taking care of your teeth is an important part of staying healthy. Poor oral health can cause problems like cavities and gum disease. It can also affect other parts of your body, like your heart or your lungs.



Common Challenges

- Holding or moving a toothbrush or floss
- Remembering to brush and floss twice a day
- Sensory issues with taste/texture
- Having a sensitive mouth or gag reflex
- Not having enough support from staff or family
- Not being able to afford supplies



Make It a Habit

Self-advocates have this advice for getting in the habit of taking care of your teeth:

- Set a goal to brush and floss twice a day.
- If you need to, set an alarm on your phone to remind you when it's time to brush and floss.
- Track your progress using a calendar, stickers, an app, or whatever works for you.
- Have everyone in the house encourage each other to stay on track.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Don't get discouraged if you miss a day! Just start again tomorrow.



By The Numbers



75% of people with IDD brush their teeth twice a day*

The most common reasons for not brushing were:

- Not liking to brush their teeth
- Forgetting to brush

*Virginia National Core Indicators In-Person Survey, 2023-2024

Dental Visits

Common Challenges

Going to the dentist is an important part of keeping your teeth healthy, but some people with IDD have trouble getting care.

Challenges include:

- Finding providers that accept Medicaid or other types of insurance
- Buildings that aren't physically accessible
- Exam rooms that aren't physically accessible
- People who aren't welcoming towards people with IDD
- Fear or sensory overload
- Movement difficulties that make it hard to sit still

28.5% of people with IDD said they had trouble getting dental care.*

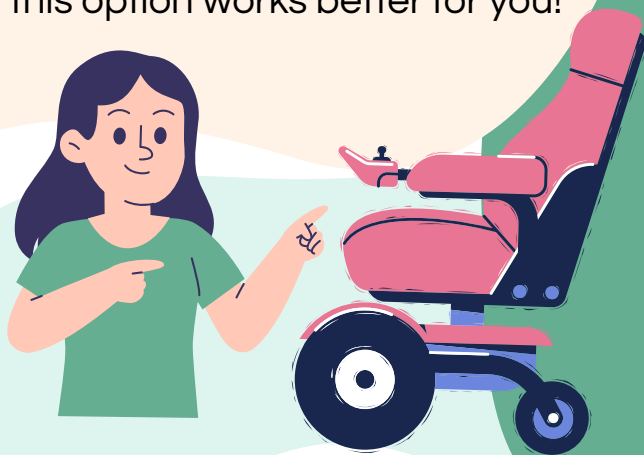
The most common reasons were not being able to find a dentist who took their insurance and being afraid to go to the dentist*

Virginia National Core Indicators In-Person Survey, 2023-2024



Bonus Tip!

Dentists may not know that a power wheelchair can tilt back and work just like an exam chair. Let your dentist know if this option works better for you!



Tips and Solutions

Plan Ahead: Call your dentist ahead of time to explain your needs, including any equipment or mobility devices.

Practice Without Pressure: If you're nervous about the visit, have a friend, family member, or staff person talk through everything that will happen. You can even make social stories or act it out!

Bring an Advocate: A trusted support person can help you speak up for yourself and help you feel safer during the visit.

Know Your Rights: If you feel scared or uncomfortable during a dental visit, you can ask the dentist to slow down, explain what they are doing, or even stop completely.



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