**Tips to introduce an electric toothbrush (plain version)**

Developed with Saskia Grassie, Children's Occupational Therapist

**Getting Ready**

To help with new and challenging experiences, it's important for both your body and mind to feel calm and prepared. Check out the 'Getting ready to brush' section on the toothPASTE website for tips.

**Take it slow**

The buzzing sound and vibration of an electric toothbrush can take time to get used to. First explore the feel of the handle and bristles when the brush is turned off.

**Familiarise at arms length**

Turn the toothbrush on and place it on something soft like a folded towel (hard surfaces make it sound much louder!). This makes it easier for children to control how much they interact with the toothbrush.

**Gentle exploration on hands**

When your child is ready, let them feel the vibration on their hands. Remember, the back of the hand is less sensitive than the palm or fingers.

**Move to arms and shoulder**

Once they're comfortable, invite them to try the toothbrush on their arms and shoulders. Use moderate pressure and go at your child’s pace. This helps bring the sounds closer in a gradual way.

**Move to jawline**

When they are ready, move on to the jawline using the handle of the toothbrush. Use medium comfortable pressure.

This might be quick or could take a few weeks. Even just a few seconds of practice each day can help make the electric toothbrush feel more familiar. The vibration might not suit everyone. If your child gets too excited or upset, stop and ask for advice.



**Electric toothbrushes: Tips for making toothbrushes more comfortable**

Developed with Saskia Grassie, Children's Occupational Therapist

**Try different solutions**

Find what works best for your child. Some children might find the handle of the toothbrush slippery, cold, hard, or too “buzzy” to hold comfortably.

**Use a baby electric toothbrush**

Consider trying an electric toothbrush made for babies or toddlers. These are often softer and smaller.

Add a hair band

Wrapping a plain, stretchy hairband around the handle might make it easier to grip.

Use silicone toe tubes

You could also try using a stretchy silicone toe tube (usually for big toes) to cover the handle. It might help to have an extra pair of hands to stretch it over the handle when putting it on.

**Try finger protectors**

Stretchy fabric finger protectors (like the ones for sore fingers) can fit most handles and provide extra padding or length.

**Appearance matters**

Some children care a lot about how their toothbrush looks and might not want any extra padding or changes to the handle.



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**Tips to help develop toothbrushing motor skills (Plain version)**

Developed with Saskia Grassie, Children's Occupational Therapist

Use a mirror

Brush your child's teeth in front of a mirror placed at a height where they can easily see themselves. This helps them understand what’s happening.

**Make them feel stable**

Ensure your child feels supported by helping them to sit, kneel or stand comfortably. Support their bottom, back and feet. Some children will also need head support and may find it helpful to rest their elbows on a surface to help with controlling the brush. See ‘Safe ways to brush’ video.

**Brush together**

Let your child hold the toothbrush with you. Some parents find that their child likes to guide the toothbrush by placing their hand over yours, which can make them feel more in control.

**Make a video**

Record a video of someone your child knows and trusts brushing their teeth in the same order that your child will follow, making sure they use the correct technique. As your child improves, update the video to reflect their progress.

