

# Looking after teeth and gums

**People with disability, children and young people are more at risk of gum disease, tooth decay, loss of teeth and related illnesses.**

## What do unhealthy teeth and gums look like?

People with unhealthy teeth and gums can:

- have bad breath
- have brown decayed teeth and sore gums
- have teeth falling out
- complain of pain when eating harder food like nuts
- complain of toothache or a sore mouth.

If someone has a tooth falling out or is in pain, contact their support worker immediately and arrange to urgently visit the dentist.

## How to help people look after teeth and gums

### Make sure people:

- brush their teeth at least once a day, preferably twice a day, with fluoride toothpaste (toothpaste with fluoride in it will say it contains fluoride on the packet)
- use dental floss every day
- go to the dentist at least once a year.

### Show people:

- how to brush their teeth correctly – see [the Australian Dental Association 'Brushing teeth' page](#) which shows you how to brush teeth correctly with both a manual and an electric toothbrush
- how to use dental floss correctly by moving the floss between their teeth in an 'up and down' movement, not from side to side – see [the Australian Dental Association 'Flossing' page](#)

If you do not have internet access, ask the person's support worker to print these pages for you.

### Make teeth brushing and dental flossing time fun

- Children may enjoy hearing and singing along to the Wiggles song: [Brush your teeth](#) while they brush their teeth.
- Brush your teeth and floss at the same time as the person and have fun.
- Follow the instructions in the video cartoon: ['The right way to brush and floss for a healthy smile'](#).

# Looking after teeth and gums

## Explain that healthy teeth and gums:

- give people a nice smile and make their breath smell good
- prevent them having toothache and sore gums, and losing teeth
- mean it won't hurt to eat harder foods like nuts
- mean fewer visits to the dentist.

Show people the [NDIS Easy Read fact sheet: Dental health](#). If you do not have internet access, ask the person's support worker to print this fact sheet for you.

## Who can help and support you?

- The person's support worker has access to the person's oral health care plan, which is developed by the person and their dentist. They can refer to it if there are problems with the person's teeth or gums, and advise you what to do next.
- The person's support worker can print out useful fact sheets and information for you if you do not have internet access.
- The person's dentist will develop their oral health care plan and advise them how to look after their teeth and gums.

## More information

- [The Australian Dental Association 'Brushing teeth' page](#)
- [The Australian Dental Association 'Flossing' page](#)
- [NDIS Easy Read fact sheet: Dental health](#)

If you do not have internet access, ask the person's support worker to print these pages for you.

- The Wiggles song: [Brush your teeth](#)
- The video cartoon: ['The right way to brush and floss for a healthy smile'](#).