

Towards independence series - 5

*Teaching
Brushing
Skills*



Teaching Brushing Skills

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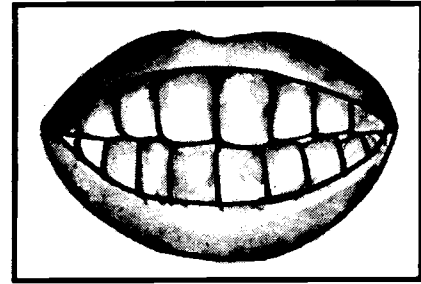
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National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped

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Care of the teeth and gums is an essential part of personal hygiene.



Mentally retarded children require systematic training in this area.

SYSTEMATIC TRAINING INVOLVES STEP-BY-STEP TEACHING

When we brush our teeth, we rarely pay attention to the steps involved, because brushing is part of our established routine.



But, Training a Mentally Retarded Child requires conscious efforts at every step.

Tooth paste



and tooth powder



are the commonly used items for brushing.

STEP-BY-STEP TRAINING IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Training Procedures



- Keep the tooth paste and brush in a place low enough for the child to reach easily.
- Keep a different coloured tooth brush for him, so that he learns to identify it by the colour.

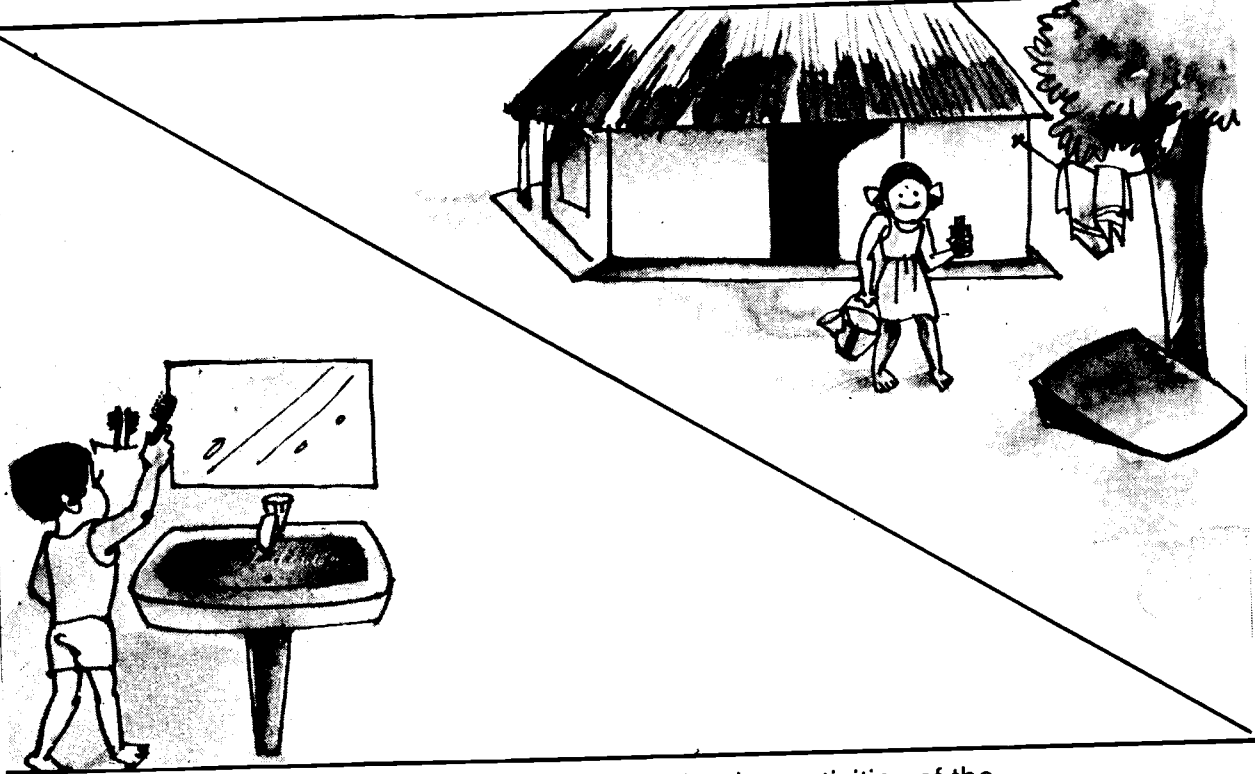


Guide the child to carry tooth powder, bucket of water and mug to the place of brushing.

Suggestion: Make it a habit in the child that every morning he would not talk before brushing, as the mouth would stink. The first thing (after toileting, if needed) he would do is brushing. This way the habit is developed in the child.



TAKE TOOTH PASTE AND BRUSH / TOOTH POWDER



Associate brushing teeth with other activities of the day, such as on getting up and before going to bed.



Show him how to
squeeze the tube and
apply required amount of
paste on the brush.

Teach him to put only
the required amount
of tooth powder in the
left palm.



APPLY TOOTH PASTE ON THE BRUSH / PUT TOOTH POWDER IN THE PALM



For easy grasp . . .



Use tooth brush that has a large handle or cover the handle with a cloth.

Note : This is preferred only if the child has a motor disability. Otherwise try and use regular ones.

Guide the child to fold the fingers of the right hand, except the index finger



Children learn better from other children. Let the child brush along with his sister/ brother and copy their movements.

"3-step ladder for training"



III STEP
Withdraw help.
Let the child do by himself.

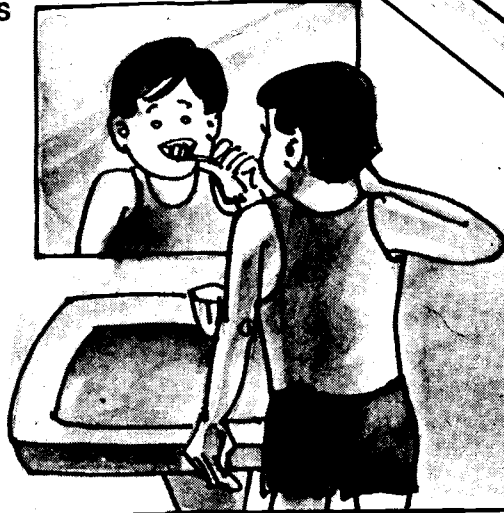
II STEP
Give only verbal directions

I STEP
Guide him physically by putting your hand over his and helping him make up and down movements.

BRUSH

Follow this order while teaching him/her to brush :

1. Front teeth.
2. Left side (as extending from front to left is easy).
3. Right side.
4. Open the mouth and brush flat and inner surfaces of teeth.



USE A MIRROR TO SEE WHILE BRUSHING



'Swallowing' the tooth paste is a common feature, because, the child, while eating, is taught to swallow whatever is in the mouth. Therefore

DEMONSTRATE SPITTING BY POURING WATER INTO YOUR MOUTH AND SPITTING IT

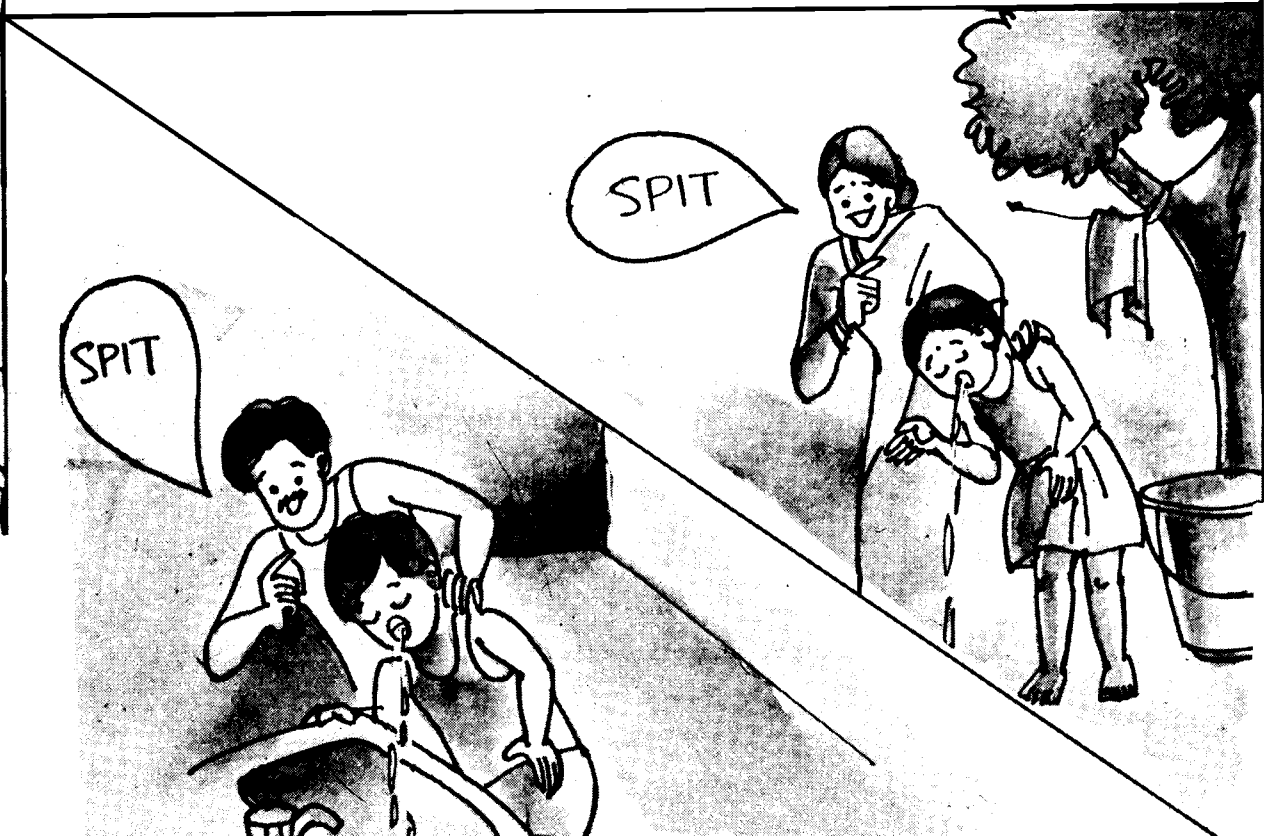
Next ask the child to spit the paste out.

Enhance spitting by holding the child at the back of the neck, in a bent position.

SPIT

SPIT

SPIT



Train the child to

- take water in the right hand,
- pour it in the mouth,
- gargle,
- spit.

Let him repeat the steps 2-3 times.

GARGLE



Let him see in the mirror how clean his teeth are, after brushing

Instruct the child to put tooth paste, brush/tooth powder,
bucket, mug, in their usual place.

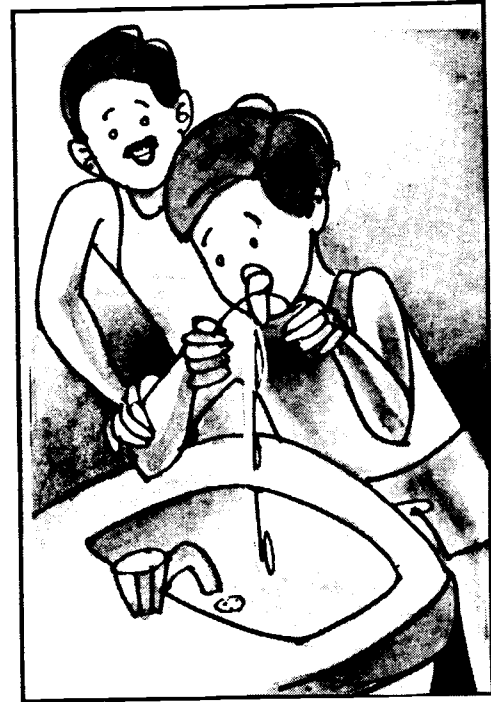
PUT THE MATERIAL IN PLACE

Help only as much as needed. Encourage the child to do more and more by himself.

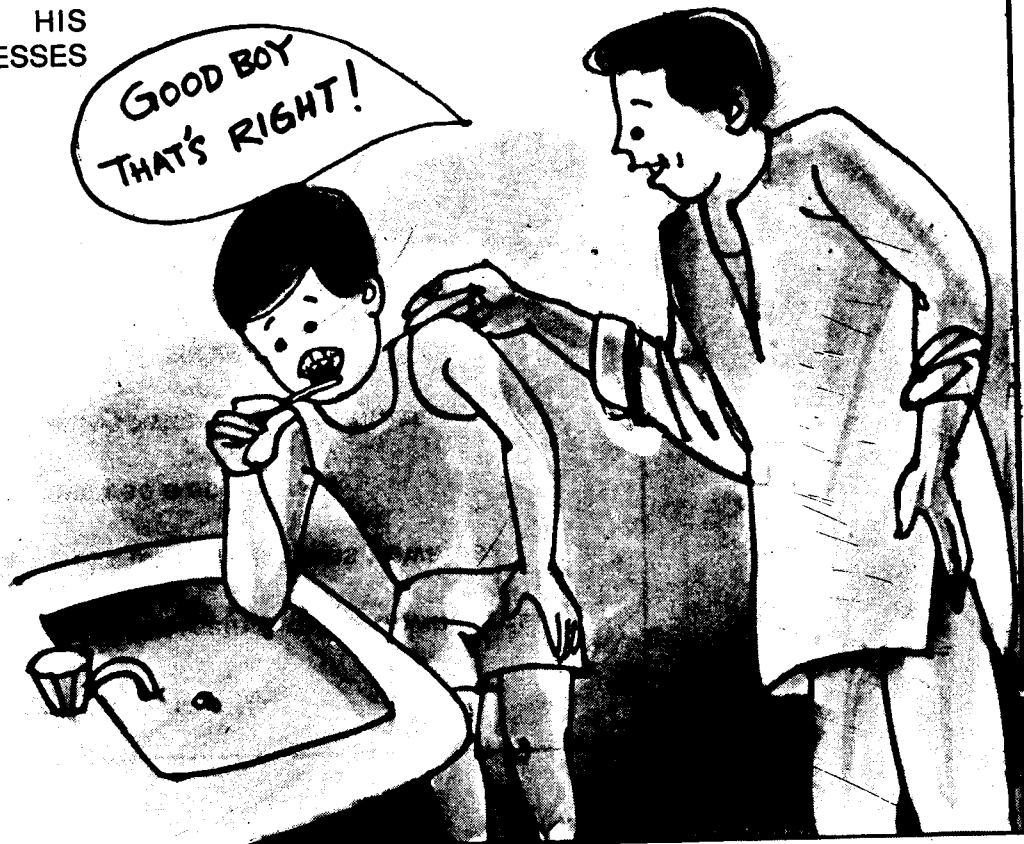


TONGUE CLEANING

- Teach tongue cleaning after the child has learnt brushing.
- Using the '3-step ladder' teach him how to hold the tongue cleaner with both hands, bend his neck towards the wash basin, move the tongue cleaner down the tongue, so that the dirt falls in the wash basin.
- Let the child rinse his mouth.



REMEMBER TO APPRECIATE
THE CHILD FOR HIS
ATTEMPTS AND SUCCESSES
AT EVERY STEP.



DENTIST'S ADVICE . . .

- **Brush upper teeth & gums downwards.**
- **Brush lower teeth & gums upwards.**
- **Always use a soft brush.**
- **Brushing twice a day is a must.**
- **Avoid all sticky sweets.**
- **All Mentally Retarded children are caries prone. So a dental checkup every 3 months is a must.**

Courtesy : Dr. R. Ramasubramanian, M.D.S.
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