

# Cleanliness

for the child with cerebral palsy



**Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy**



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# CLEANLINESS

for the child with Cerebral Palsy

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# Foreword

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**B**arely three decades ago, the majority of children with severe developmental disabilities like cerebral palsy were regarded as ineducable. However, in the last few years, there has been a marked increase in the awareness of cerebral palsy and its implications. The most significant realisation has been the fact that the education of a child with a disability is not concerned merely with his intellectual development. The management of a child in every sphere of daily living is of equal importance. Consequently, an interdisciplinary and integrated approach is essential for achieving the maximum progress of a child.

Parents play a primary role in teaching their child the various skills of daily living. Undoubtedly, the parents have the best understanding of their disabled child, but they may often be unaware of the best way to go about this enormous task.

The Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy (IICP) is the training and research division of the Spastics Society of Eastern India. The need for more information on cerebral palsy has long been felt both by parents and professionals. With this objective in mind, the IICP has planned to produce a series of books and booklets, written by a team of special educators, therapists and social workers. It is hoped that the easy to follow guidelines and illustrations will help parents in the daily management programme of their child.

A disabled child has the desire as well as the ability to learn different skills. With time, effort and constant encouragement, he will eventually achieve results to the best of his ability.

# BRUSHING TEETH

Children learn to brush their teeth while they are still very young. A handicapped child may have many difficulties while brushing his teeth independently. Parents may also face problems when they brush their child's teeth.

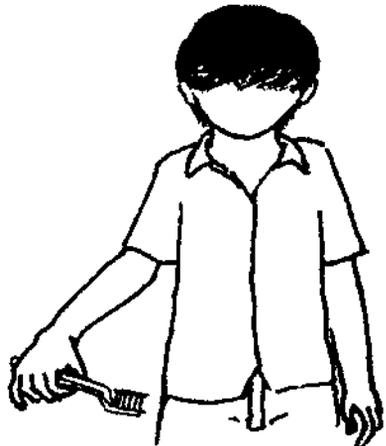
The following suggestions and ideas will make it easier for you to teach your child.

## POSITIONING

Encourage your child to use the toilet area of the house for brushing his teeth like the other members of the family.

You may be able to help your child to brush his teeth independently if he has the ability to:

- a) hold the brush



b) and take it to his mouth.

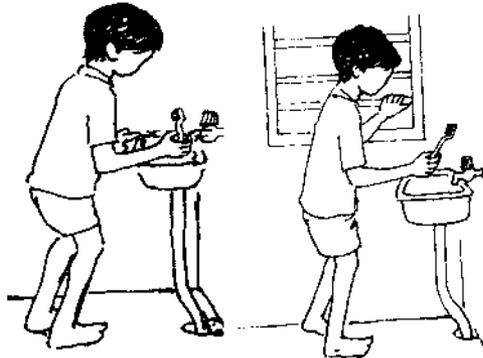


Some positions which will make it easier for your child to brush his teeth are mentioned below.

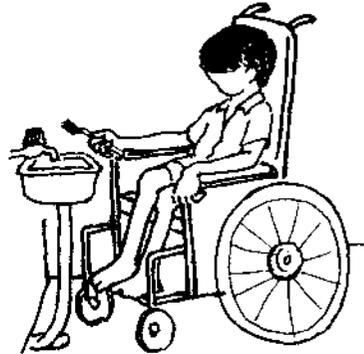


If your child can stand without help, he can brush his teeth standing independently.

If he finds it difficult to stand without support, help him to hold the sink or the window grill with one hand and his brush with the other hand.



He can also sit on a chair or a wheelchair in front of the sink.



If you do not have a sink in the house, give him a plastic bowl and a bucket of water. Place the bowl on a low table in front of him. He can use the bowl as a sink and take water from the bucket with a glass.

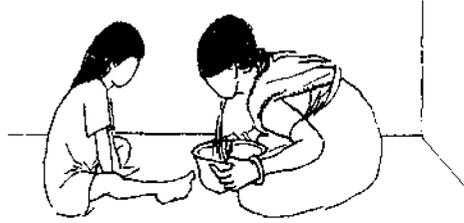


He can sit either on the floor



or on a low stool.

Tell your child to do the same.

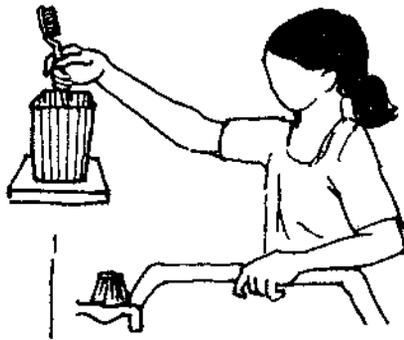


If she finds it difficult to hold a glass, fix the glass in one place. Teach her to use a straw and then rinse her mouth.

Some children find it difficult to gargle and spit out the water. If this is the case with your child, take a glass of water and pour a little into her mouth.



Then quickly tip her head forward so that the water is thrown out. Do this several times to clean the mouth properly.



Make sure that you teach your child to wash and put the toothbrush back in its proper place. This could be in some container or on the shelf.

You can also teach your child to put toothpaste on the toothbrush. Many physically handicapped children find it difficult to do this and may need to practise for a long time. Give your child the opportunity to practise regularly under close supervision, so that too much paste is not wasted.

Alternatively, you can put some toothpowder in a wide-mouthed container. Teach your child to dip his toothbrush into the container and brush his teeth.

Children with severe physical or mental handicap may never be able to brush their teeth independently.

You can teach them to cooperate by opening their mouth and allowing you to brush their teeth.



If your child struggles and refuses to cooperate when you brush his teeth, you will gradually have to teach him how to sit or stand still. The following suggestions may help:

- a) Try not to use force. The more you force him, the more he will struggle.
- b) Use a soft brush. Be extra careful to ensure that you do not hurt him.
- c) Constantly talk to him and praise him for being good while you brush his teeth. This may keep him calm.
- d) After brushing his teeth for a few seconds, reward him with something he loves. You could give him a toy or let him play with water.

As he gradually learns to cooperate with you, give him a reward only after you have finished brushing his teeth.

# BATHING

Most children enjoy bathing as they love to splash and play with water. Using suitable positions and adaptations, you could make bathing fun for your handi-capped child.

A young child is usually given a bath by an adult. However, if your child is older and unable to bathe himself because of his handicap, it can be very difficult for the family.

Given below are a few suggestions and adaptations which may be helpful under such circumstances:

- Choose your bathing area carefully.
- Bathe your child in the bathroom or verandah where the water can drain out. This will avoid the unnecessary effort of cleaning up the room after he has had a bath.
- Keep the necessary items like soap, towel, mug and bucket close at hand.



- Bathe your child after he has used the toilet. This will save you the trouble of dressing and undressing him twice.

## POSITIONS FOR BATHING

Sit in a position that will be convenient for you to bathe your child.

If you bathe her on the floor, sit on a low stool with your child seated in front of you.



If your child is small, use a plastic tub or bowl. While he is seated in the tub, soap the top half of his body, his legs and feet.

Then hold him up and soap his bottom and thighs.

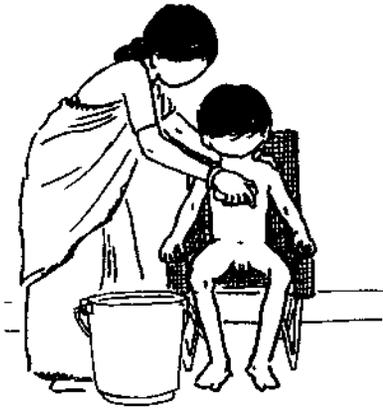


Keep a low wooden chowki next to you and spread a towel over it. After his bath, place him on this chowki to wipe and dress him.

If he is too big for a tub but does not have sitting balance, then put him in a corner seat and bathe him.



You can also place your child in a large plastic basket and bathe him. As the water will drain out of the basket, you can wipe and dress him in the same position.



If you find it easier to bathe him sitting in a higher position, you can seat him on a plastic chair or a potty chair with the pan removed. You can wipe him in the same position.

If your child does not have good sitting balance, you may need to tie him loosely to the chair with an old dupatta. This will prevent him from falling forward.



If you have a commode which your child uses for toileting, use it as a seat to give him a bath.



## **TEACH YOUR CHILD TO BATHE HIMSELF**

Teach your child to bathe, preferably using the bathing area in the house where all of you have a bath.

Tell him to keep the soap, towel, mug and bucket of water close at hand.

If he is not very steady while standing, he can:

Sit on a chair or a low stool and keep all the things he needs next to him.



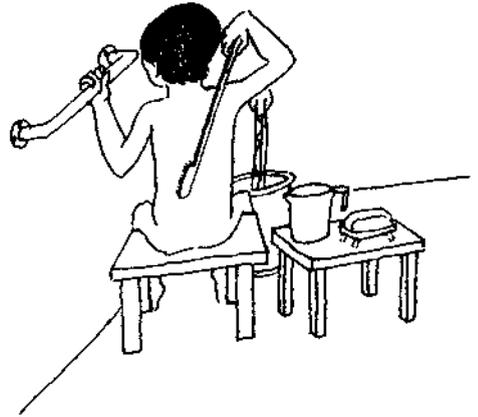
Hold a support and stand.



Sit on the floor or on an old towel or rubber mat so that he does not slip.

Teach your child to scrub himself with soap and clean himself thoroughly.

A brush with a long handle which is available commercially, could be used to scrub his back or any other area which is difficult for him to reach.



He can also put an old sock on his hand when he soaps himself.

Teach him to rinse himself by sitting under the tap or shower.



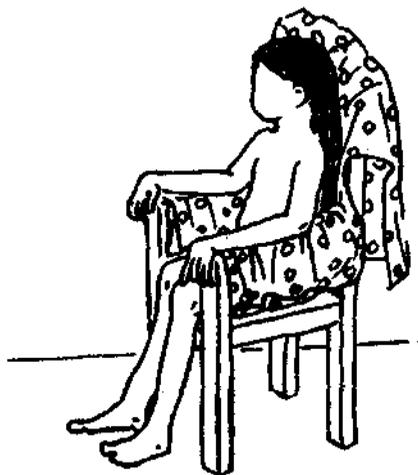
He can pour mugs of water over himself from a bucket.



If he finds it difficult to do this, you can attach a pipe to a tap or, in the absence of running water, to a drum filled with water. He can use the pipe to rinse himself.

Teach your child to open and close the tap if you have a tap or a shower.

Teach him to wipe himself by using a towel or a 'gamcha'. If your child is unable to wipe his back, teach him to fling the towel or 'gamcha' on his back and pull it up.



You can place a 'gamcha' or a towel along the back and seat of a chair and ask your child to sit against it. This will help her to dry her back as well as her hair.

**Always remember to teach your child to clear up the bathing area after bathing.**

He should hang the towel or 'gamcha' for drying. He should put the soap, bucket and mug back in place.

**From the beginning, allow your child to participate as much as he can while you are bathing him. As he gradually learns to do it himself, reduce your help.**

## CARE OF NAILS

### To ensure cleanliness of nails you can:

Clean your child's nails with soap and a soft brush while you are bathing her. You can also teach her to do it herself.

If she finds it difficult to clean her nails with a brush, you can teach her to dip her fingers in a solution of soap and warm water and then rinse her hands.



Keep the nails short by cutting them once a week. This will prevent any dirt from collecting in them.

If your child struggles and does not cooperate while you are cutting his nails, you will have to teach him to sit still. The following suggestions may help:

- a) Try not to use force. The more you force him, the more he will struggle.
- b) Be careful to ensure that you do not hurt him.
- c) Keep talking to him and praising him for being good while you cut his nails. This may keep him calm.
- d) After cutting each nail, reward him with something he loves. It could be a small piece of sweet or a sip of his favourite drink. This will encourage him to cooperate with you.

Gradually as he learns to cooperate, give him a reward only after you have cut all his nails.

Teach your child to use a nailcutter if he can. If he finds this difficult, you can teach him to rub his nails on a nail file which has been fixed to a wooden board.

## CLEANLINESS OF NOSE

**It is important for all children to keep their nose clean.**

You can teach your child to keep his nose clean by:

Reminding him to blow his nose every morning when he brushes his teeth.

If he is unable to blow his nose on his own, you can assist him by holding his nose over the sink and asking him to blow. Then wash his face with water.

Always encourage him to carry a handkerchief. He should use this to clean his nose.



If he cannot clean his nose with a handkerchief, tie a 4" wide band of soft old cloth or towelling on his wrist. He can use this to wipe his nose.

Make sure to change it regularly.



You can try and teach your child to blow his nose by demonstrating it yourself and asking him to imitate you.

Children who are very severely handicapped and cannot learn to blow their nose have to be assisted. You can do this by using a handkerchief and gently pressing his nose with your fingers.

Teach your child to cooperate while you are cleaning his nose. The following suggestions may help:

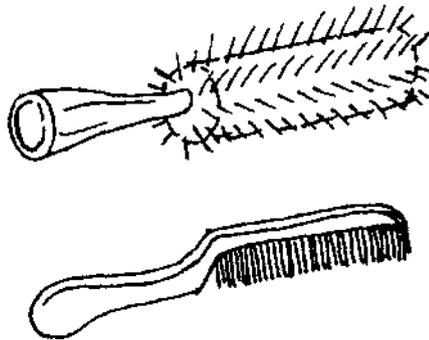
- a) Try not to use force while cleaning his nose. The more you force him, the more he will struggle.
- b) Keep talking to him and praising him for being good while you clean his nose. This may keep him calm.
- c) After cleaning his nose, give him a reward. It could be something he loves such as a toy or something he enjoys eating. This will encourage him to cooperate with you.

## CARE OF HAIR

**Cleanliness of hair is very essential.**

You can teach your child to keep her hair clean by:  
Reminding her to comb her hair thoroughly.

If she finds it difficult to hold a comb, give her a brush or a comb with a handle for better grip. This may help her to comb her own hair.



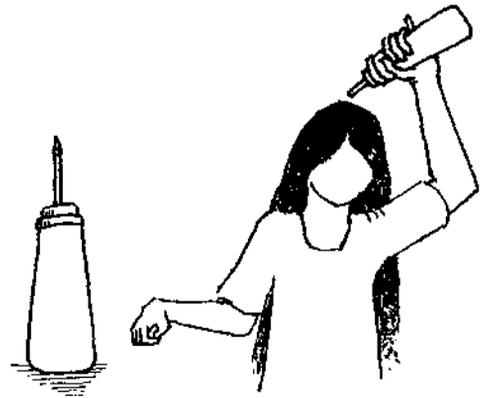
If your daughter has long hair which she cannot comb properly, you may have to consider cutting her hair short. This may make her independent in combing her hair.

Some children may not be able to comb their hair in spite of being helped. You will need to teach such a child to cooperate by sitting in one place while you comb her hair.

If your child struggles while you are combing her hair, you will gradually have to teach her to sit still. The following suggestions may help:

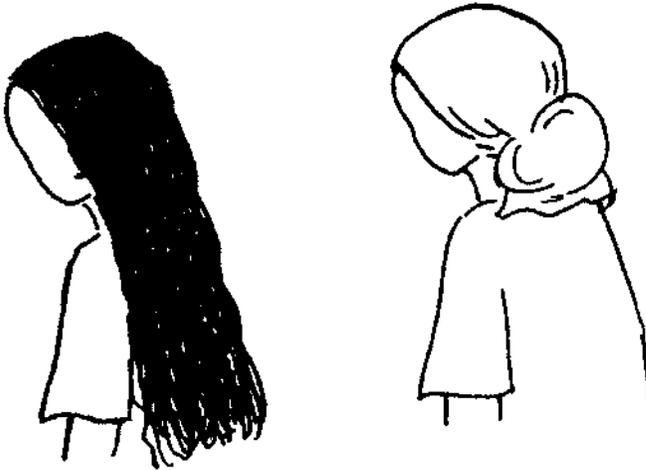
- a) Try not to use force. The more you force her, the more she will struggle.
- b) Be careful to ensure that you do not hurt her while combing her hair.
- c) Keep talking to her and praising her for being good while you brush her hair. This may keep her calm.
- d) After brushing her hair, reward her with something she loves such as a toy. Or you could let her play for a few minutes. This will teach her to cooperate with you.

Shampoo and oil her hair at regular intervals. If she finds it difficult to soap her hair, teach your daughter to use a plastic bottle with a nozzle and squirt liquid soap (shampoo) on her hair.



Then she can use one or both hands to build up a lather.

If she finds it difficult to dry her hair, she can wrap a towel on her head for 10 minutes. The towel will soak the water from her hair.



**Teach your child cleanliness from a young age. Encourage him constantly. Even if he is unable to be totally independent, he will improve to the best of his ability.**