

# DENTAL TIPS FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS



## When to schedule a visit

- All children, including those with special needs, should have their first visit to a dentist six months after their first tooth comes into their mouth, or by their first birthday. (whichever comes first).
- Depending on the oral health condition of the patient, dental visits may be required more frequently than twice a year to maintain good oral health.

## Contacting the dental office

For a person living with a disability, or who has access and functional needs, choosing a dental home and knowing what to expect upon arriving is the first step toward achieving good oral health. You may find it helpful to ask the dental office the following questions.

- PARKING:** How far is parking from the entrance?
- ACCESSIBILITY:** Can a wheelchair or assistive technology be used in the office?
- Entry:** Do you have a ramp or elevator? How many stairs are there to the office?
- Meet Staff:** Does the office allow an office visit to meet staff if requested.

## CONTACTING THE DENTAL OFFICE (CONTINUED)

### Guardian:

Does a parent or guardian need to be present or can an assistant or other family member bring the patient?

### Treatment:

Is the parent/guardian, or assistant allowed in the treatment area during visit?

### Sedation:

Does the office provide sedation in the office or in the hospital? If sedation is not preferred, what are the other options?

### Interpreter:

Are they available in the office?

### Service Animals:

Are they allowed?

### Assistive Devices:

Do the office have large-print documents, magnifying glasses, communication boards, or audio devices available.

### Experience:

Have staff been trained to manage individuals with special needs such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, where patients may need to follow routines, or who may be sensitive to touch?

### Payment:

Do they participate with your insurance? Do they have payment plans?

### Cancellation Policy:

How much notice is required to cancel an appointment? What is the charge for cancellation?



## Making the appointment

*Dental health care providers rely on the information they receive to prepare for the visits. You can help them by providing the following information:*

### Personal Information:

- Name and age
- New or returning patient
- Date of last dental visit

### Reason for visit:

- Urgent need: Pain or swelling in face, mouth, fever, up at night, fall, injury to mouth
- Concern: Changes in eating or drinking habits, new apprehension about brushing, flossing, fall, gums bleeding
- Preventive dental care: Dental cleaning, examination, fluoride, dental sealants

### making the appointment (continued):

#### Patients' Special Needs:

- Unable to transfer out of wheelchair
- Needs antibiotic premedication for specific condition
- Special behavioral concern

#### Insurance information:

- Name of dental insurance, group number, ID number?
- Is the patient covered by more than one dental insurance policy?
- Visit related to accident, covered by auto insurance, homeowners, ect.

#### Emergency Contact:

- Phone Number where you can be reached
- Alternative emergency contact

### Tips to reduce anxiety

#### Talk about going to the dentist

- Use words the person will understand, using a positive or neutral tone of voice.

#### Avoid anxiety-provoking language

- "hurt," "shot," "needle," "gag," and "drill;" "Don't worry the dentist won't hurt you. They won't give you a shot."

#### Use positive engagement

- "The dentist will tell you how to keep your teeth strong." "It will be an exciting adventure going to the dentist."

#### Visit the dental office before the appointment

- Ask the dentist if you can visit before the appointment.
- Consider taking a friend or relative to the appointment, if allowed.

## DAY OF THE APPOINTMENT

### Ask Questions

- Prepare questions in advance of your visit and bring them with you.

### Sample Questions:

- Do you have tips to make home care easier?
- We have well water. Should my child get sealants?

- Who do we call if we have an emergency and your office is closed?
- Do you have tips for teething?
- How do you inform me of the costs and needed treatment?
- What should we do in the event of a facial injury?