

# Preparing your child with autism for a dental visit



## When making a dental appointment:

- Ask the dental office if they provide special support for children with special needs.
- Ask if you can bring your child in for an introductory visit, tour or to watch a dental exam.
- Inform the dental office about any communication, sensory or behavioral sensitivities your child may have for the upcoming visit.
- Let the scheduler know of any concerns you have about your child's ability to cope during the upcoming visit.
- Request an appointment time during the quietest time of day (first morning or first afternoon).

## What you can do at home:

- If a family member or friend is having a routine dental visit before your child's visit, take your child to watch. Let your child know that they will only watch, no one will touch them.
- Role play a dental visit at home:
  - Buy basic dental tools for your child to play with at home, such as dental floss and electric toothbrush (the sound will be similar to the tool used by the dentist).
  - Let your child explore these tools while playing.
  - Allow your child to brush the teeth of another family member, doll or stuffed animal.
- Ask your child's school or therapist to assist teaching your child what to expect at a dental visit.
- Show your child a video about a dental visit, such as the one found here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOcA2CT3NL8>

## Things to bring with you:

- Your child's regular toothpaste just in case your child does not want the dentist's toothpaste.
- Sunglasses and earplugs if your child has issues with bright lights or loud noises.
- A favorite toy, activity, blanket, teddy bear, tablet or headphones with music for comfort.

## During your visit:

- Inform the dentist of your child's special needs and any concerns about the visit.
- Share your ideas to help your child cope and ask the dentist for their creative ideas.
- Have the dentist show the tools and equipment to the child first, to gain the child's trust.
- Allow your child to touch and practice using the equipment.
- Plan something rewarding after the dental visit and remind your child of the reward plan.

If during the visit, your child is having a difficult time or if you are worried for your child's safety or the safety of others, you are encouraged to end the visit. You can then discuss with the dentist other options. It is best to provide the most positive dental experience possible so that future dental visits will be successful.