

# The Dentist

Good dental care is important. A big obstacle can be our own childhood memories of the dentist. Dentistry has changed. Advances in equipment and techniques make the process less painful. Pediatric dentists create a child-friendly environment.

- 1 Find a pediatric dentist. They have the most experience with children with developmental delays.
- 2 Take your child to the waiting room when he does not have an appointment. Let him explore the waiting area and then go home.
- 3 Make a list of your child's favorite DVDs. Many offices play movies for the patients. It is good to have a suggestion of an alternate movie if your child dislikes the one that is being shown.
- 4 Read a social story with photographs about going to the dentist.



## The Child with Autism Goes to Town

- 5 Bring some of your child's favorite toys to distract him from the dental exam.
- 6 In the first few visits, the dentist will often just look in your child's mouth and touch his teeth and then do a gentle brushing.
- 7 Tell your child that the dentist is counting his teeth. Many children with autism count everything, and counting teeth will make perfect sense.
- 8 Children with autism may benefit from several visits to the dental office to acclimate to the office routines, sounds, smells, and people.
- 9 Have your child observe a cooperative child during a non-invasive dental appointment. This only works if your child has an interest in what others are doing.
- 10 Have your child practice opening his mouth at home. After a small wait, pop a candy in his mouth.
- 11 Have your child practice opening his mouth and put in a Popsicle stick. Move it around like the dentist might. Give your child a reward.
- 12 Have your child practice spitting by hav-



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- ing a spitting contest at the sink. Your child will love this.
- 13 The first time your child goes for a real cleaning, use a mild sedative until he gets used to the routine. Consult with your dentist.
  - 14 Be in the treatment room with your child to assist the dentist by keeping your child's hands away from the dentist and the instruments in your child's mouth.
  - 15 Give the dentist an opportunity to talk to your child. Your child may be more cooperative with a friendly dentist who looks at him while talking to him.
  - 16 Check to see if your child's dental surgery can be done in the hospital under general anesthesia. Insurance will usually pay if the dentist submits a letter of medical necessity. Dental insurance usually doesn't cover anesthesia unless there was an accident, but Medical Assistance often will, even if the dentist doing the work doesn't accept Medical Assistance.
  - 17 Use nitrous oxide if your child can handle getting dental work done in the office.

