

What to Expect at Your Dental Visit

A Resource for Offices to Help Patients



This tool is an EXAMPLE of what people with disabilities and their support persons can expect before, during, and after a dental visit. It includes tips on what to bring, available accommodations, sensory expectations, communication supports, and ways the office can make your appointment more comfortable.

A message to Dental Offices: Customize this tool with the blank template.

Before Your Appointment

1. What to Bring (Mandatory)

- ☐ Your ID
- ☐ Your Insurance Card
- ☐ A list of your medications
- ☐ Write down the office phone number:

2. What to Bring (Optional)

- ☐ Your favorite comfort item
- ☐ Your communication support devices
- ☐ Your caregiver or support person
- ☐ A weighted blanket
- ☐ Sunglasses for bright lights
- ☐ Noise-canceling headphones

3. Special Accommodations

We want you to feel comfortable! Let us know if you want to talk to our office about any of the accommodations below.

- Extra time for your appointment
- A quiet waiting area
- Pictures or social stories about dental procedures
- To visit the office before your appointment to meet the team or take a tour

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During Your Appointment

1. When You Arrive

- Our friendly front desk team will greet you
- You can sit in our quiet waiting area if you prefer
- We have fidget toys and magazines available
- You can use our restroom if needed
- Have the office ask if a patient needs a grace period once they get into the office, before beginning their appointment

2. Meeting Your Dental Team

- Your dental assistant will come to get you
- They will wear a name tag, so you know who they are
- You can choose if you want to walk or use a wheelchair
- Your support person can come with you

3. In the Dental Chair

- The chair moves up and down - you can try it first!
- You can hold up a "STOP" card anytime you need a break
- We'll explain everything before we do it
- You can choose your favorite music or show to watch
- We have different flavors of fluoride you can pick
- The light above the chair can be dimmed if too bright

4. Common Sounds

- Gentle humming or buzzing from cleaning tools
- Water spraying and the suction straw making a slurping sound
- Soft beeping from equipment
- The dentist, hygienist, or other patients talking
- A TV or music playing in the background
- Phones ringing or keyboards clicking at the front desk

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After Your Appointment

- The dentist or hygienist will tell you what was done today.
 - You can get a plain-language or picture summary to take home.
 - Staff can review any care instructions with you and your support person.
 - You can schedule your next visit before you leave.
 - If you need help remembering, you can ask for reminders (phone call, text, or email).
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Important Notes for Support Persons

- Appointments can be scheduled during quiet hours
- We can break treatments into shorter visits if needed
- Multiple visits to get comfortable with the office are welcome
- Virtual walk-through or pre-recorded video of a tour of the office
- Please share any specific triggers or calming techniques
- We can provide visual schedules and social stories
- Let us know about any dietary restrictions for fluoride flavors
- We can adjust lighting, sounds, and sensory inputs as needed or as much as possible