

Dental Care & Autism

Efficacy Rating
NA

Dental Care

Because of the specific challenges related to the core deficits in autism, dental health may be compromised in several ways:

- Children with ASD often exhibit oral sensitivity and are highly resistant to routine hygiene measures
- Many families report limitations in their ability to accomplish tooth brushing with their children.
- Some children with ASD may have abnormal dietary practices (e.g., prolonged bottle dependence and bottle caries) or an inability to clear food particles from their mouths.
- Sensory (e.g., tooth grinding) or self-injurious behaviors (e.g., hits to the face), and complications of seizures or medication (e.g., trauma, and gum hyperplasia) may be observed.

All of these dental care challenges may require more aggressive management. On occasion, examinations and treatments may require appropriate and safe anesthesia techniques.

Coping with a visit to the dentist's office is often an additional stressor for families of children with ASD. Professionals can support families in planning ahead for a dental visit by:

- Putting together a social story or social script that outlines the steps of the dental visit.
- Creating opportunities to act out a play script
- Viewing a video model for 'going to the dentist' with the accompanying social communication
- Including strategies for preparing to go to the dentist as part of the child's health and or educational plan.

Dental Care Resources and Information

Websites:

Practical Oral Care for People With Autism

<http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/NR/rdonlyres/2D5FE889-ED47-4407-BC1E-45525E8FFFC9/4441/autism.pdf>

Article:

Special Care in Dentistry (2002, May/June). Dental care considerations of special care populations. *Special Care in Dentistry*, 22(3), Supplement.

Book:

Volkmar, F. R., & Wiesner, L. A. (2004). *Healthcare for children on the autism spectrum: A guide to medical, nutritional, and behavioral issues*. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House.

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