

Smile Special 

A Social Initiative by *Maximus dental*



# Home Dental Care for Children with Autism and Autism Spectrum Disorders

Caring for the dental health of children with autism and autism spectrum disorders (ASD) presents unique challenges. Sensory sensitivities, communication difficulties, and routine disruptions can make dental care stressful for both the child and their caregivers. However, with proper strategies and understanding, you can create a supportive environment that promotes good oral hygiene. This eBook provides practical tips and techniques to help parents and caregivers maintain the dental health of children with autism and ASD at home.

**by Dr Nidhi Gupta**

## Understanding the Challenges



### Sensory Sensitivities

Children with autism often experience heightened sensory sensitivities, which can make the sensations associated with toothbrushing uncomfortable or even painful. The taste and texture of toothpaste, the bristles of a toothbrush, and the sound of brushing can be overwhelming.



### Communication Difficulties

Children with autism may have difficulty understanding the importance of dental care, making it hard to establish a consistent oral hygiene routine. Communication barriers may make it challenging for children to express discomfort or understand the process of brushing and flossing.



### Behavioral Challenges

Behavioral challenges, such as difficulty sitting still or following instructions, can also complicate dental care.

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## Creating a Dental Care Routine



### Choose the Right Time

Pick a time when your child is calm and relaxed. Brushing after meals helps reinforce the habit. Consistency makes the process easier.

### Create a Visual Schedule

Visual schedules help children understand each step of the dental care routine. Use pictures or symbols to represent each step, like picking up the toothbrush, applying toothpaste, brushing, and rinsing. Review the schedule with your child before starting.



### Use a Timer

Many children with autism benefit from knowing how long an activity lasts. A timer helps them understand toothbrushing has a clear start and end. A two-minute timer ensures proper brushing time.



### Offer Positive Reinforcement

Praise your child for their efforts, even if they don't brush perfectly. Positive reinforcement, like praise or a reward, encourages cooperation and makes the experience more enjoyable.



### Incorporate Sensory Accommodations

If your child is sensitive to brushing, use a toothbrush with softer bristles or an electric toothbrush. Let your child choose their toothbrush and toothpaste to give them control.

# Teaching Proper Brushing and Flossing Techniques



## Modeling

Show your child how to brush and floss by demonstrating it yourself.



## Hand-Over-Hand Guidance

Place your hand over your child's hand to guide the toothbrush.



## Focus on One Area at a Time

Instead of all teeth at once, focus on one area at a time.

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## Addressing Sensory Sensitivities



### Desensitization Techniques

Gradually introduce the toothbrush by letting your child explore it before using it.



### Temperature Control

Experiment with lukewarm water to see if it makes brushing more comfortable.



### Texture Preferences

Choose toothpastes that match your child's texture preference.



### Environmental Modifications

Create a calm environment by dimming the lights, playing calming music, or using noise-canceling headphones.



## Preparing for Dental Visits



### Practice Visits

Before the actual dental appointment, consider arranging a practice visit. This can involve simply visiting the dental office, meeting the staff, and sitting in the dental chair. Familiarity with the environment can help reduce fear and anxiety.



### Social Stories

Social stories are personalized short stories that describe a situation or activity in a way that helps children with autism understand what to expect. Create a social story about visiting the dentist, including details about the sights, sounds, and sensations your child might experience.



### Role-Playing

Role-playing can be an effective way to prepare your child for a dental visit. Use a toy dentist set to practice the steps of a dental exam, such as counting teeth, using a mirror, and pretending to clean teeth. This can help your child become more comfortable with the process.



### Communicate with the Dentist

Inform the dentist about your child's specific needs and sensitivities before the appointment. A dentist experienced in working with children with autism can make accommodations, such as allowing extra time for the appointment or using sensory-friendly tools.

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## Conclusion

Maintaining good dental health for children with autism and autism spectrum disorders requires patience, creativity, and understanding. By developing a consistent routine, addressing sensory sensitivities, and preparing for dental visits, you can help your child build positive dental care habits that will last a lifetime. Remember, every child is unique, and it may take time to find the strategies that work best for your child. With persistence and support, you can make dental care a positive and successful experience for your child.

**For more info contact us:**



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**Opening hours**

Timings: 10:00 am to 7:00 pm  
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On Sunday by prior appointment only

