Dental Care for Patients with ADHD

by SHARON BOYD

ADHD Dental Care

ADHD can make an hour-long dental appointment very difficult. Being able to focus on what the provider is communicating with you or your child and sitting for an extended period, can present quite a challenge. Dentists who are committed to quality care will be able to help patients experience a positive dental visit, regardless of whatever special needs they may have. Here are some tips to help you experience better dental health when living with ADHD.

During Dental Appointments

Patients with moderate to severe ADHD may become irritated during their care, especially if they are exposed to longer appointments or new stimuli. Keep visits short and sweet, preferably in the morning. If necessary, break the treatment up into smaller appointments, so that there is less time sitting still. A weighted blanket may help some people sit more comfortably.

Nitrous oxide is a great way to help relax most patients, including those with ADHD. It's easy to administer and takes only a few minutes to achieve calming results. Oral sedation or hospital sedation may be useful for patients that have a large amount of treatment that is needed, to complete it all during the same appointment. Many dentists offer oral sedation to patients of all ages as a way to help them cope with anxiety related to dental care.

Bringing something along with you to the appointment is perfectly fine. Some people use headphones and MP3 players to distract themselves during their appointments. Others may bring handheld video games, movie players or word puzzles. Having something in front of you to keep you busy is fine, as long as it doesn't get between your mouth and the line of sight of your provider.

How Medications Affect Oral Health

Patients with ADHD frequently take medications that cause them to crave sugar. Because of this, they often have a higher rate of tooth decay. Sugar doesn't necessarily mean eating candy. Many things that people don't often think about can cause decay if the teeth are exposed to them frequently throughout the day. Some examples include fruit juice, milk, diet soda and fruit snacks. Keep these types of foods restricted to meals, and for snacks, choose fibrous fruits and water.

Home Care

Using an electric toothbrush is a great way to maximize plaque removal during brushing. It encourages independence with children and removes more bacteria than a manual toothbrush. Always brush for at least 2 minutes twice each day. Consider purchasing a brush that has a built-in timer to alert you when it has been the full 2 minutes. It is perfectly fine to allow your child to brush their own teeth, as long as the parent brushes the child's teeth for them at least once a day. Flossing between floss picks is an easy way to ensure that the areas

between the teeth are cleaned, preventing decay.

If possible, add a home fluoride gel or rinse to your end-of-the-day routine. Fluoride is excellent for remineralizing weak enamel or areas that are cavity-prone.