



Sensodyne's Sensory Inclusion Initiative

As the experts in tooth sensitivity, we're on a mission to build sensory inclusion in oral care, connecting patients with dentists who understand their needs.

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU VISIT THE DENTIST – AND HOW TO PREPARE

Oral health is an essential part of overall wellbeing – but for people with sensory sensitivities, the experience of going to the dentist can be overwhelming, stressful, painful, and even traumatic.

Sensory sensitivity occurs when everyday life is affected or limited by how a person experiences the world around them through their senses. While sensory sensitivity looks different for everyone, it can make even daily activities extremely difficult, let alone something as high-sensory as a dental appointment. This is true for many people and can be especially pronounced for many neurodivergent individuals or for those with certain disabilities or conditions that may impact sensory processing.



The following guide will provide an overview of what to expect during a typical dental appointment as well as how to advocate for yourself and your needs. You are also empowered to bring someone with you to be your advocate during the appointment. Feel free to share these tips with your advocate so they can help support your requests.

BEFORE THE VISIT:

Find a Sensodyne x KultureCity Sensory Inclusive™ Certified dental practice.

Using the KultureCity App, look for dentists in your area that are **Sensodyne x KultureCity Sensory Inclusive™ Certified**, or are already implementing sensory inclusive practices.

Learn more by visiting kulturecity.org/sensodyne-sensory-inclusion-initiative

Once you've identified a dentist – whether using the KultureCity App or another avenue – reach out and communicate early about your sensory needs. Leveraging the intake form for discussion is a great way to bring up the issue of sensory accommodations with your dentist.



If your dentist does not offer resources, create your own sensory bag. This might include items like headphones to help block out abrasive sounds from dental equipment, sunglasses to help protect your vision from bright overhead lights, or a fidget tool to provide comfort and help regulate senses. Bring whatever may help you manage sensory overload – it's about you and your care.

THE WAITING ROOM:

On the day of your appointment, verify with the staff your request for accommodation and confirm the staff understands your specific needs.

In the waiting room, you might notice bright lights and various sounds, such as conversations, ringing phones, and background music. The receptionist will greet you, ask for your name, and may have some questions to check you in for your appointment and update paperwork.



IN THE DENTAL CHAIR:

While every appointment and patient experience is unique, there are a few things you can expect:

- When it's time for your appointment, the receptionist or dental assistant/dental hygienist will say your name. For a routine cleaning or check-up, a dental hygienist will assess your teeth, gums, and mouth for any issues before the dentist provides an examination of your oral health.
- A cleaning can be a high sensory experience. You are often asked to lie back before a bright light is used to better see your teeth. This is a good opportunity to wear sunglasses if you have light sensitivities.
- While the hygienist is cleaning your teeth, there will be moments where they may use products with a strong taste or water flosser that can be quite stimulating. If this is concerning, you can often request a milder toothpaste or lighter touch with the tools.
- If you have any concerns or need a break, don't hesitate to let them know. They are there to help make your visit as comfortable and stress-free as possible.



AFTER THE APPOINTMENT:

After the appointment, the dentist will explain any issues they found and suggest a treatment plan if necessary. They will also help you plan your next routine check-up, usually recommended every six months or sooner depending on your needs.

Before you leave, make sure you understand what is expected and ask any clarifying questions you may have for the dentist. If you need anything written down, the staff is there to assist you. Remember, you are your greatest advocate, and by communicating your needs you can help create an inclusive and supportive dental experience.



Note: Some patients need more comprehensive or meticulous support with regards to their dental experience. Sedation dentistry is an option you can explore in your area should you need it to support your oral health.