

# Cary Pediatric Dentistry

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## Recognizing Sensory Implications

*The following is a list of suggestions to consider when your child has to wait.  
Support provided by Developmental Therapy Associates, Inc.*

### Motivation: Recognize stimulating interests

**1. Identify what your child likes to do.**

*What interests him? What does he gravitate towards? What does he hold in his hands? What does he look at or find visually pleasing?*

**2. Identify your child's toy repertoire.**

*How many toys does he play with? Does he only focus on one toy or topic? Are there many toys with which he will engage?*

**3. Identify how long your child can entertain himself with this/these items.**

*Does he play with the items for hours? Minutes? Does he flit from one activity to another?*

**4. Identify what aspects of the item(s) are engaging.**

*Does he enjoy the sounds of the different instruments in music or the rhythm of a drum? Shapes and colors in a kaleidoscope? Spinning of a cassette tape? How a toilet works?*

### Environment: Consider the immediate area

**1. Recognize what anxiety or frustration looks like in your child.**

*Does he pace? Exhibit self-stimulatory behaviors? Bite or hit himself or others? Yell or make other vocalizations?*

**2. Identify what causes anxiety or stress for your child.**

*Loud noises, fluorescent lighting, change in his routine, transitioning from one activity to another?*

**3. Identify calming (stress-reducing) activities.**

*Listening to music, pacing, deep-pressure (squeezes, hugs, weighted blankets), bouncing on a therapy ball.*

**4. Identify what can be eliminated from the environment or activity.**

*What has to stay to accomplish the goal? What can you do without? What can you do ahead of time to reduce the amount of time in that environment? For example, can you fill out required paperwork at home? Is it possible to make arrangements to be the first patient scheduled?*

**5. Identify what you can do to make the experience less stressful.**

*What can you do to eliminate anxiety-provoking item(s) from the environment. For instance, if the lighting is overwhelming, will sunglasses help? If the environment is loud, will headphones playing favorite music work? If it is the unexpected (not knowing what is going to happen), will a visual system with words and/or pictures outlining the event provide some clarity?*

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## **Sensory Diet: Address the Sensory Systems**

What sensory items can you bring with you to help your child organize and maintain appropriate behavior in the waiting room?

**1. Identify activities that affect the proprioceptive system (sense of body position, deep touch to the skin, heavy work for the muscles & movement of the body).**

*Will exercising prior to going to the waiting room help to release anxiety? Will carrying a weighted backpack or weighted toy help calm the nervous system? Will walking around the parking lot or building a few times help release nervous energy? Will getting up to stretch every few minutes provide needed sensory feedback? Will tensing and releasing muscles throughout his body, squeezing his fingertip or rubbing his arms help?*

**2. Consider the senses and ways to provide sensory input.**

- Things to touch: *preferred stuffed animal, doll, blanket, textured quilt, slinky, koosh balls*
- Things to hear & ways to reduce noise: *MP3 player, portable CD player or walkman, headphones to block noise*
- Things to watch: *MP3 with video capability, portable DVD player, magazine, portable game system, gadgets with bubbles, kaleidoscope, fish tanks*
- Things to smell: *scratch-n-sniff books/ stickers, small containers of lotions, scented sachets, cotton balls, cards*
- Things to taste/chew: *sour candy, chewy bagels, crunchy carrots, sweet fruit, salty pretzels, spicy chips, gum*
- Things that address balance, gravity & ways to move: *place a cushion filled with air in the seat (disc seat, move 'n sit, core disc), use a rocking chair, bounce on a therapy ball*

***For more information about sensory processing differences, consider these options.***



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