

# Healthy Smiles for Children with Autism

## How does autism affect my child's teeth?

- Cavities are the **most common chronic disease** of all children.
- Children with cavities in their baby teeth are more likely to have cavities in their adult teeth.
- Children with autism may have more **dental problems due to difficulty brushing, diet, and difficulty finding dental care.**



## It is hard to brush my child's teeth. What should I do?

- Make **brushing** twice a day part of your everyday **routine**.
- **Try different positions:** rest your child's head in your lap or lay them on the bed and kneel behind them.
- Try a **three-sided brush** for special needs.
- Do what you can, **stick with the routine**. Brushing will get easier.

## What about going to the dentist?

- Take your child to the **dentist by age one**, and for regular check-ups.
- Choose a **pediatric dentist** who has experience with children with autism.
- Get a **movie or book** on visiting the dentist to help prepare your child.
- Ask if you can **visit before the first appointment** to see the office and meet the staff.
- **Practice** looking in your child's mouth with a disposable mouth mirror available at drug stores.
- Ask the dentist about **sealants and fluoride**.

## What else can I do to prevent cavities?

- **Do not share anything** that has been in your mouth with your child. This can spread the germs that cause cavities.
- Never let your child walk around with a bottle or sippy cup.
- **Give healthy snacks** like fresh fruits, vegetables and low-fat cheese.



