

Preparing to visit the Dentist

**A resource to help anyone assisting a
person with reduced understanding to
attend the dental practice.**

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This guide has been developed to help carers / family members and anyone assisting a person with reduced understanding to attend the dental practice.

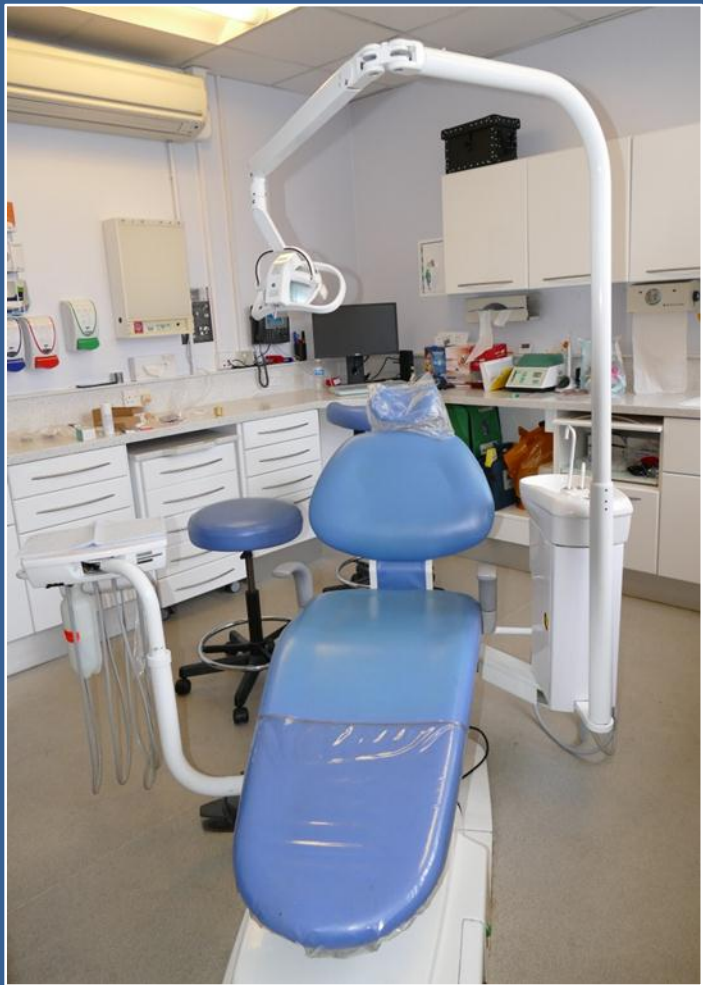
<https://www.nhs.uk/livewell/dentalhealth/Pages/Dentalhome.aspx>

The screenshot shows the NHS Choices website page for dental health. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'NHS choices' and the tagline 'Your health, your choices'. Below this is a search bar and a menu with options like 'Health A-Z', 'Live Well', 'Care and support', 'Health news', and 'Services near you'. The main content area is titled 'Dental health' and features a large image of a smiling person's teeth. Below the image is the heading 'Take care of your teeth' and a sub-heading 'Keep your teeth and gums as healthy as possible and keep visits to the dentist to a minimum.' To the right of this section is a 'Services near you' search box with a dropdown menu set to 'Dentist' and a 'Find services' button. Below the main section is a smaller box titled 'How to keep your teeth clean' with a sub-heading 'Brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste will help keep your teeth and mouth healthy.' and an image of a toothbrush. At the bottom, there is a section for 'Children's teeth'.

If possible use a dental practice that the person is familiar with. A diagnosis of dementia or Learning Disability does not mean that someone has to go to a specialist dental practice.

- The pictures in this guide may be helpful to use to explain the dental visit to the person.

- Use the practice website to familiarise yourself and the person you are caring for before you visit. Questions you have such as disabled parking and physical access could be answered on the website.
- When you call for the appointment explain that the person may need a longer appointment due to their communication and level of understanding.
- Ask who you will be seeing - there may be a picture of the dentist on the website which might help preparation for the visit.
- You may like to visit the building with them or go to a dental practice the patient has been to before.
- You may have to wait in a waiting room before seeing the dentist, think about taking something to pass the time.



- Explain the need for a visit to the dentist.
- Take a list of medication and dosage that the person you are accompanying takes and a list of their health conditions if available.
- Take along any valid Lasting Power of Attorney documentation with you.
- Is there anything that might help to keep the person calm – taking some music with you?

Discuss the questions that might be asked -

Payment – take exemption evidence with you.

Consent - What do you use to help understanding?

Pain – Has the person you are accompanying had any pain in their teeth, mouth or gums?

- Is there any bleeding when the teeth are brushed?
- Can the person eat hot and cold food and drinks without pain?
- Do they have any problems or pain when chewing?
- Do they own dentures and if so do they wear them?



Tunic, glasses, mask and gloves - If the dental staff already have these on it can be disconcerting.

You could always ask the dentist to remove these initially if it is causing distress to the person you are with.

Why are these needed?

Tunic - Protect the dentist's clothes and form a physical barrier.

Mask - so that they don't breath any germs to you or you to them.

Glasses - Protect eyes from *debris* during examination

Gloves – Make a physical barrier between germs and the mouth.

All these help to prevent cross infection



Dental Chair- The fact that this chair moves and makes a noise should be explained. Some people can feel like they are falling out of the chair.

It might help to ask the dentist to demonstrate the chair before the person you are accompanying gets into it

Lighting - The light is very bright and can be difficult for those who are sensitive so taking sunglasses can help with this.

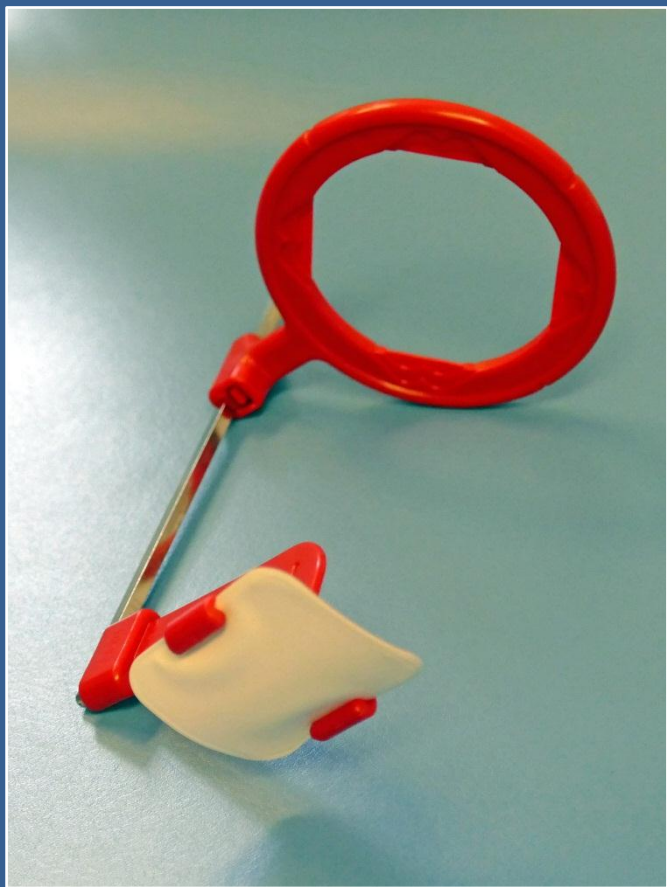
The light is needed to help see all the areas of the mouth.



Mirror and probe - Often these are not seen until they are in the patient's mouth

- the mirror helps the dentist see the teeth
- the probe is used to check for cavities (holes in the teeth), this can make a scratching noise.
- The dentist may use an air blower to dry the teeth

If you think it will help, ask the dentist to show the mirror and probe to the person you are accompanying before they are used.



Plastic holder and x-ray

X-Ray – to check areas we cannot see with our eyes.

- small x-ray taken by putting a film in a plastic holder inside the person's mouth; this can be quite uncomfortable but is very quick.
- big x-ray may be needed to see all the person's teeth. This is a large machine which moves around the head. It is quite noisy and requires the person to keep still for about 60 seconds



Hospital - if a general anaesthetic is needed the person you are assisting will be treated in a hospital setting. They may be referred to see a different dental professional in another clinic if their dental treatment is complicated.

After care

The dental professional will give advice on how the person can maintain good oral health at home and help you to understand how to support the person you care for.

It is a good idea to ask the dental care professional to write down the advice given for you to take home.

Notes

This resource was developed by Andrea Metcalfe, Southend CCG with help from:

Community Dental Services, CIC

Public Health England, Dental Public Health Program Manager

Essex Local Dental Network (LDN)

Southend Borough Council - Dementia Community Support Team,
Adult Safeguarding and Care Provider Contracting.

April 2018