

Key Takeaways

Navigating Oral Motor and Dental Health

*Featuring Dawn Hamilton and Dr. Matt Mara, DDS
Facilitated by Haley Thomas, LMSW*

*This panel series hosts dedicated members
of the HIE community as they offer
valuable insights into their experiences with
oral motor and dental health.*

HOPE **for HIE**

HIE Peer Perspective Series



NAVIGATING THE FIRST DENTAL APPOINTMENT



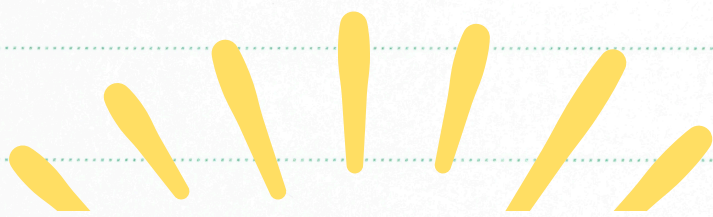
It may seem early, but aim to make the first appointment **by or before 12 months:**

- ↳ Helps you get established with a trusted provider
- ↳ Allows for conversations about oral care, diet, and more
- ↳ Builds anticipatory guidance
- ↳ Establishes a dental home for your child



It may take time to find the right provider to work and grow with the needs of your child:

- ↳ Rely on referrals from the Hope community or other allied healthcare professionals!



NAVIGATING THE FIRST APPOINTMENT, CONTINUED

 It is okay to shift your mindset away from the typical “script” of what happens at the dentist; progress with flexibility and try to adapt to change when needed

 Perhaps “**success**” is better defined by:

↳ Finding a provider who is open to meeting the evolving needs of your child.

↳ Having conversations about goals, needs, and approaches to care

↳ Establishing comfort levels and making it an enjoyable experience, as much as possible.

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WAYS TO PREPARE AT HOME FOR DENTAL VISITS



Begin familiarizing your child with **sensory sensations** they may experience ○ ○ ○

↳ Use gentle vibrations or touch, tickle, and massage their gums with your fingers



Try to create a dental care routine that is fun or is part of a **bonding experience!**

↳ For developmentally younger children, consider using stuffed animals or songs that encourage repetitive actions, like opening their mouth

↳ For developmentally older children, play dentist, read books, or talk through what to expect

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STEPS TO HELP YOU PREPARE WITH YOUR PROVIDER

- ★ If they are willing or able, have **advance conversations** about your child's oral aversions, needs, goals, or concerns.
- ★ You know your child best, so don't be afraid to **advocate** or have **direct asks/requests**
- ★ Brainstorm how you can help facilitate or be an **active participant** in the process
 - ↳ i.e. helping maneuver around the room or holding their head
- ★ Rely on suggestions from other allied professionals, like **feeding therapists or child life specialists**

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SUGGESTIONS FOR IF AND WHEN THE VISIT DOESN'T GO AS PLANNED



First, remember that this can be a challenging process and that you're doing your very best.

Then, consider ○ ○ ○

↳ Accomplishing smaller goals but with more frequent visits

↳ Creating a list of "must-dos" vs. "can-dos." Perform as many as you can until their fatigue threshold is reached

↳ Making a contingency plan for the next visit



While a traditional outpatient visit is likely the goal, you may consider scheduling a cleaning **during a planned hospital procedure.**

CONSIDER USING THESE APPROACHES AND COPING STRATEGIES



Try to **schedule** when it is the best time for your child ○ ○ ○

↳ Consider the best time of day, their feeding schedule, etc.



Co-create a “**stress reduction**” plan

↳ Make a music playlist

↳ Find a stuffed animal to snuggle

↳ Eat a favorite breakfast or lunch



Don't be afraid to **communicate and advocate** for needs during the appointment



Understand that every visit and the progress that comes with it will be **different**

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NAVIGATING ORTHODONTICS AND PROCEDURES



Ask for **referrals** from trusted providers



Anticipate helping with x-rays, especially if your child has mobility needs



Tackle the **biggest priorities** or issues that are most concerning **or** are the most manageable to treat



Establish **clear expectations and align your goals** from the start



Be open to variations or changes in the treatment plan



The goal is to get to the endpoint, whatever looks like for you!



UTILIZE HOPE **for HIE** RESOURCES



Register for our support group events

↳ HopeforHIE.org/events



Community connections through relevant Facebook subgroups

↳ Tinyurl.com/HopeforHIEGroups



Visit our comprehensive support network for access to our...

↳ Peer Mentorship Program

↳ On-staff social worker

↳ On-staff certified child life specialist

↳ And more!

HIE.SUPPORT