



## 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.

### TIPS FOR TALKING TO YOUR DENTIST ABOUT YOUR SENSORY SENSITIVITY AND NEEDS

Navigating a dental visit can be challenging, especially for those with sensory sensitivities.

#### What are sensory sensitivities?

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 other conditions that may impact sensory processing.



Recognizing your sensitivities and communicating them to your dentist or dental provider can help you to receive the care you need in an environment that is most comfortable for you. You are your strongest advocate and have the power to shape your dental experience to meet your sensory needs. The following guide is meant to help you ensure your oral health experience is comfortable and accommodating to your specific needs.

**Identify your sensitivities to allow your dentist or dental provider an opportunity to provide appropriate accommodations.** Below are some common sensitivities that may make an oral care visit overwhelming:



**Sound Sensitivities**  
High-pitched whirring, clinking, suction noises.



**Visual Sensitivities**  
Bright overhead lights, shiny metal instruments, reflections in mirrors.



**Oral Sensitivities**  
Taste of dental materials (fluoride, numbing gel), oral pressure and grinding.



**Scent Sensitivities**  
Antiseptic smells, latex gloves, medicinal odors.



**Physical Touch Sensitivities**  
Hands or instruments in the mouth, vibrations from tools, proximity to dental staff.



**Bodily Awareness Sensitivities**  
Holding still for extended periods, jaw positioning to keep the mouth open.



**Internal Sensation Sensitivities**  
Awareness of breathing patterns when limited to the nose, heart rate changes, sweating, or nausea from stress.



**Physical Balance Sensitivities**  
Reclining in the dental chair, head movements guided by dentist, traveling between rooms (X-ray, dental chair, waiting room, etc.)

## Share your sensitivities prior to an appointment

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Taking initiative can be challenging, but it's important to find ways that work for you to share your needs. This may include designating an advocate to support your needs and champion your requests. If you're able, call or email the dental office before your visit to inform them of your specific sensory needs and communicate openly about your preferences with your dentist and the dental staff. You should also feel empowered to ask questions about the procedures and what to expect, as understanding the process can help reduce anxiety.

## Use the following FAQs to help guide the conversation with your dentist or dental professional:

- What accommodations do you have in place for patients with sensory sensitivities?
- Do you offer any resources, such as noise-canceling headphones, sunglasses, or weighted blankets, to help make the visit more comfortable?
- Can you provide a detailed explanation of what to expect during the appointment, including any sounds, lights, or sensations I might experience?
- Are there options for milder or non-flavored toothpastes or less intense processes or tools for the cleaning?
- How do you handle breaks during the appointment if I start to feel overwhelmed?
- Can the lights be dimmed or adjusted during my visit?
- Is it possible to have a quiet room or a less busy time slot for my appointment?
- How do you communicate each step of the procedure to help reduce anxiety?
- What should I bring with me to help manage my sensory sensitivities during the visit?
- Are there any specific preparations I should make before my appointment to ensure it goes smoothly?
- How do you handle feedback during the appointment if something is causing discomfort?



## Align on accommodations

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By discussing what triggers discomfort and what accommodations you might need with your dentist or dental professional, you will learn what resources the dental office can provide and what you may need to bring yourself, such as:

- Noise-canceling headphones or earplugs
- Sunglasses or dimmed lighting
- Unscented or mild-scented products
- Blankets, neck pillow, or cushions
- Mild or non-flavored dental products
- Frequent breaks

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](https://kulturecity.org/sensodyne-sensory-inclusion-initiative)