# Dentist Plan

What happens at the dentist, how it might feel, and what your child can do about it.

**Inside**

What is happening, and what might happen
How your child might feel — including feeling okay
11 things they can actually do
A Now → Next board and cut-out cards
Two short rehearsals
A guide for the grown-up

*Every child responds differently.*
*Use, skip or adapt any page to suit your child.*

# What is happening?

**I am going to the dentist.**

# What might happen

Not every visit has every step. Read it through together before the day.

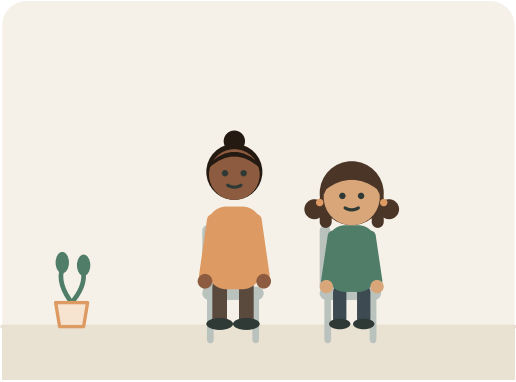
## 1 Going to the dentist

I am going to the dentist.

## 2 We arrive

We arrive at the clinic.

## 3 Wait



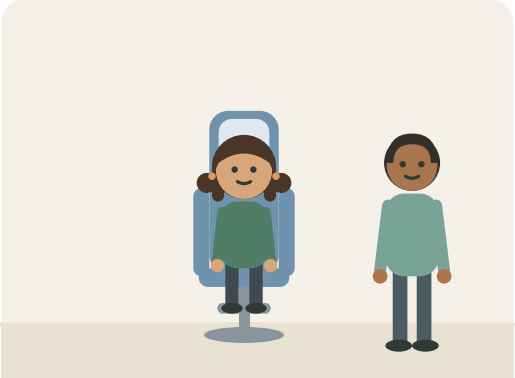
Sometimes we wait in the waiting room.

## 4 The dentist says hello

The dentist calls my name and says hello.

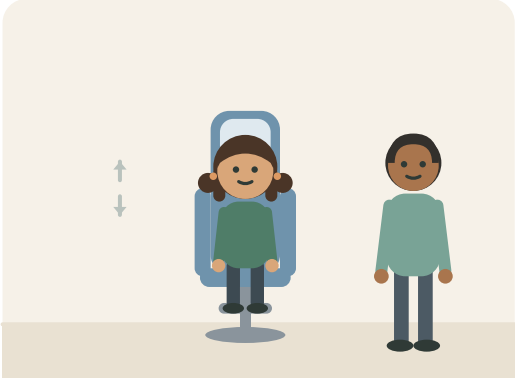
# What might happen

**5** **Sit in the chair**



I sit in the big chair.

**6** **The chair moves**



The chair might tip back slowly.

**7** **Gloves and a mask**

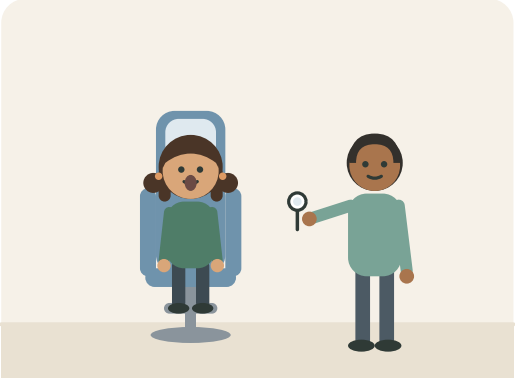
The dentist might wear gloves and a mask.

**8** **The bright light**

A bright light helps the dentist see.

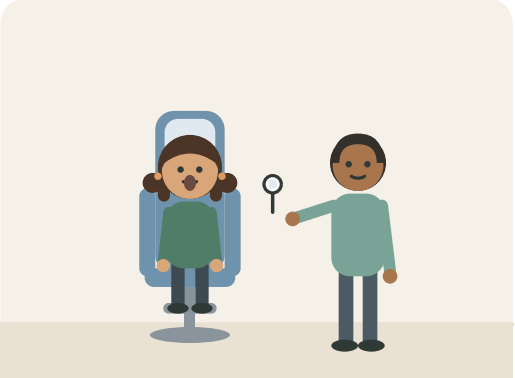
# What might happen

**9** **Open my mouth**



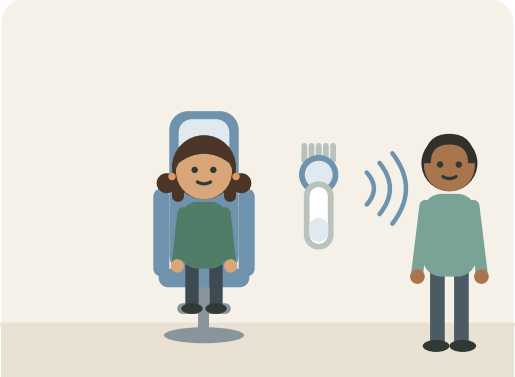
I open my mouth wide.

**10** **Looking at my teeth**



The dentist looks at my teeth and counts them.

**11** **The tools make sounds**



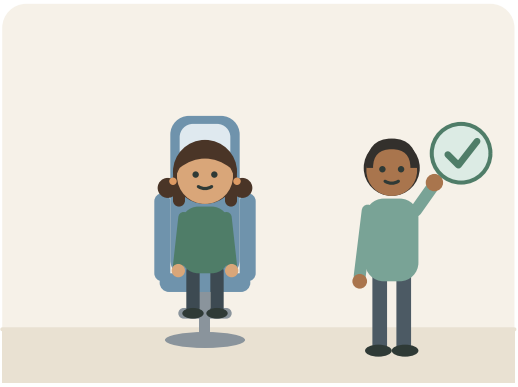
Some tools buzz or whirr. Some tickle.

**12** **A clean, sometimes**

Some visits have a clean. Some do not.

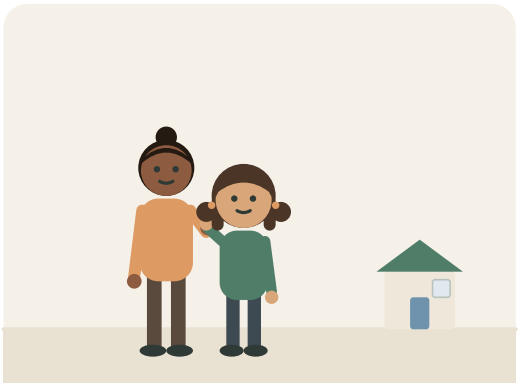
# What might happen

**13** **Finished**



The visit finishes.

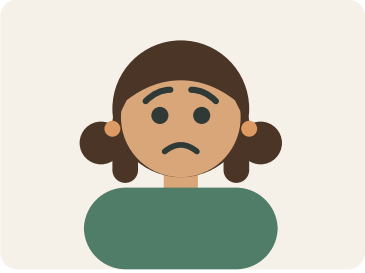
**14** **We leave**



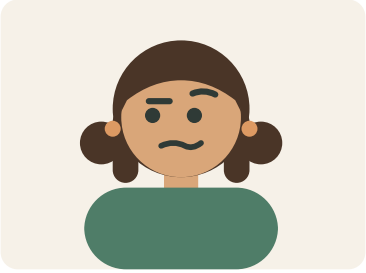
Then we can leave.

# How might I feel?

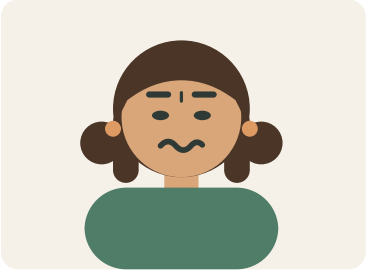
Point to any that fit. More than one is fine, and there is no wrong answer — including feeling okay about it.



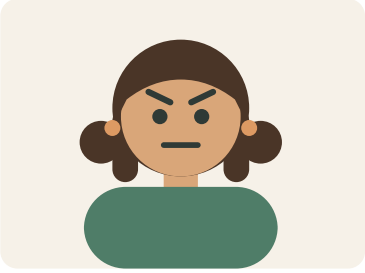
**Worried**



**Unsure**



**Uncomfortable**



**Annoyed**

**Okay**

**Curious**

**It is okay if this feels uncomfortable. The next page is things that can help.**

# What can I do?

Cut these out along the dashed lines. Your child can point to one instead of having to find the words. Nothing is printed on the back of this page.

**Hold a grown-up's hand**

**Hold my favourite thing**

**Put my hand up to stop**

**Ask for a break**
**“Break, please.”**

**Say stop**
**“Stop, please.”**

**Ask them to tell me first**
**“Tell me before you do it.”**

**Ask what happens next**
**“What happens next?”**

**Wear sunglasses**

**Wear headphones**

**Close my eyes**

**Take slow breaths**

# Now → Next

Show what is happening and what comes straight afterwards. Write what your child is doing afterwards in the Next box, or draw it.

**NOW**

**Dentist**

→

**NEXT**

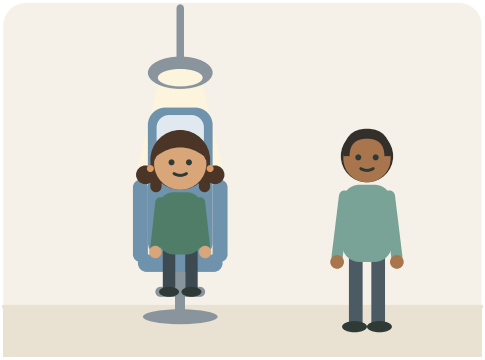
*write or draw what happens afterwards*

## First → Then

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Sit in chair** → Check teeth | **Check teeth** → Next activity | **Break** → Back to the check-up |

# Let's practise

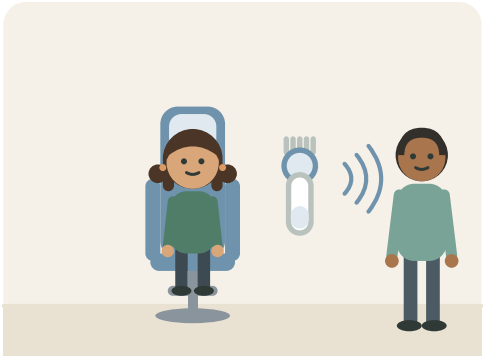
Ask the question, then look at the answers together. Every one of them works — this is a rehearsal, not a quiz.



## The light is too bright. What could I do?

- Close my eyes
- Wear sunglasses
- Say stop — “Stop, please.”

**Yes. Closing your eyes, sunglasses, or saying “Stop, please” all work.**

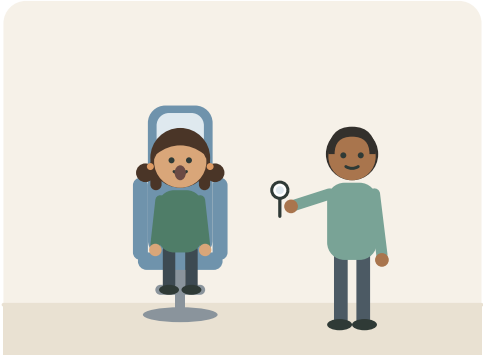


## I can hear a loud tool. What could help?

- Wear headphones
- Ask for a break — “Break, please.”
- Hold a grown-up's hand

**Yes. Headphones, asking for a break, or holding a hand all work.**

# Let's practise

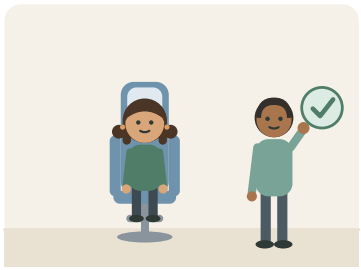


## I need them to stop, but my mouth is open. What could I do?

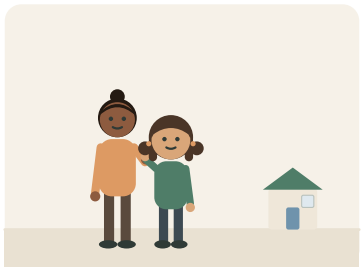
- Put my hand up to stop
- Ask for a break — “Break, please.”
- Ask them to tell me first — “Tell me before you do it.”

**Yes. Putting your hand up, asking for a break, or asking them to tell you first all work.**

# What happens next



**The visit finishes.**



**The chair comes up. Then we can leave.**

**Then I can…**

*write or draw it*

Fill the last box in before you go, and show it again on the way. Knowing what comes afterwards is what makes the middle part bearable.

# For grown-ups

Two or three minutes of reading. The child's part is on the page above — this part is for you.

## Before the visit

- Go through it together on a calm day, not in the waiting room.
- Two or three short goes over a few days works better than one long one.
- Let your child stop whenever they want to. Making them sit through it again turns the resource itself into something to resist.
- Ring the clinic and say what helps. Ask for a quiet time of day, and ask whether a short look-around visit before the real appointment is possible — many practices will.
- Ask what this appointment is likely to involve. A check-up, a clean and an x-ray are three different experiences, and knowing which one you are preparing for is the difference between a resource that helps and one that misleads.
- Agree the stop signal — a raised hand is the usual one — with your child AND with the dentist, before anyone sits down.
- Pack whatever you chose above: headphones, sunglasses, the comfort item.

## During

- Say less than feels natural. A running commentary is more to process, not less.
- Show the card instead of explaining it. Point at the step you are on.
- Offer one or two choices, not an open question. “Sunglasses or eyes closed?” is easier than “What do you want?”
- Back the stop signal the moment it is used. A signal that gets ignored once is a signal your child will not use again.
- Name what you can see — “that light is really bright” — rather than correcting it. Agreeing costs nothing and it is usually true.

## If your child refuses

- Refusing is information, not misbehaviour. Something about it is not workable yet.
- Try a smaller step: sitting in the chair with nothing happening, going up and down in it, or just counting teeth with a mirror and no tools.
- A check-up done across two appointments still counts as a check-up.
- Some children manage a look but not a clean, or the front teeth but not the back. Getting part of it done is a real result.
- Ask the practice whether they see many autistic or anxious children — some have a particular dentist or a longer appointment slot for exactly this, and it is a fair question to ask when booking.

## If it does not work

# For grown-ups (continued)

**Visual supports help many children and do not work for every child. This one may make a dental visit more predictable; it cannot promise that a visit will be calm, and a child who becomes distressed is not doing it wrong. Not every practice can accommodate every support on this list — check what is possible when you book, so nothing offered here turns into a promise the day cannot keep.**

If dental visits are consistently distressing, or your child has pain, it is worth saying so directly when you book — practices can plan for it, and some have longer appointments or particular clinicians for this. Your dentist or GP is the right person to ask about what is possible for your child. This resource is educational material, not dental, medical or therapeutic advice.

*Roo Bloom provides educational materials, not therapy or medical advice.*