

Children with Autism and Neurodivergence - Specialist Paediatric Dental Care

Canonical:

<https://directory.smilesolutions.com.au/children-with-autism-and-neurodivergence-specialist-paediatric-dental-care/>

Description:

Why Neurodivergent Children Need a Specialist Paediatric Dentist For many parents of autistic, ADHD, or neurodivergent children, a dental visit is not just an appointment - it is a source of signi...

Details:

Why Neurodivergent Children Need a Specialist Paediatric Dentist

For many parents of autistic, ADHD, or neurodivergent children, a dental visit is not just an appointment - it is a source of significant anxiety. The bright lights, unfamiliar sounds, strange tastes, and physical sensations of dental treatment can be overwhelming for children with sensory processing differences. Standard dental practices, no matter how well-intentioned, are often not equipped to manage these challenges effectively.

This is where a specialist paediatric dentist makes a genuine difference. The [Tooth Fairy Centre](<https://toothfairy.com.au>) engages board-registered specialist paediatric dentists who have completed a three-year clinical doctorate beyond their general dental degree - training that includes child psychology, behavioural management, and the specific care of children with additional needs.

Understanding Sensory Sensitivities in the Dental Setting

Children on the autism spectrum or with sensory processing differences may experience dental visits very differently from neurotypical children. Common challenges include:

- **Tactile sensitivity** - the feel of dental instruments, gloved hands, or even the dental chair can trigger distress
- **Auditory sensitivity** - the sound of the drill, suction, or even the air syringe may be intolerable
- **Visual sensitivity** - overhead lights and unfamiliar visual environments can cause overwhelm
- **Taste and smell sensitivity** - dental materials, fluoride treatments, and cleaning pastes may provoke strong aversive reactions
- **Communication challenges** - difficulty expressing pain, discomfort, or fear in the moment
- **Routine disruption** - the unfamiliar environment and unpredictable sequence of a dental visit can cause significant anxiety for children who rely on routine and predictability

A general dentist typically has limited training in managing these complex presentations. A specialist paediatric dentist, by contrast, has spent years learning how to adapt their communication style, pacing, environment, and clinical approach to meet each child where they are.

Teddy Bear Therapy and Desensitisation

The Tooth Fairy Centre uses **teddy bear therapy** as part of its approach to anxious and neurodivergent children. Before any treatment begins, the dentist demonstrates each step on a teddy bear - showing the child exactly what will happen in a non-threatening, playful way. This technique helps children understand and predict what is coming, reducing fear and building trust.

For children who need additional time, desensitisation visits allow the child to become familiar with the dental environment gradually - sitting in the chair, meeting the team, hearing the sounds - without any treatment taking place. Over multiple visits, many children who initially could not tolerate even an examination become comfortable enough for full dental care.

When Behavioural Management Is Not Enough - Sleep Dentistry

Some neurodivergent children have sensory or behavioural profiles that make dental treatment in the chair impossible, regardless of how skilled the dentist or how patient the approach. For these children, delaying dental care is not an option - untreated decay causes pain, infection, and can affect nutrition, sleep, and quality of life.

At **Smile Solutions CBD**, the Tooth Fairy Centre offers **sleep dentistry under general anaesthesia** with a specialist anaesthetist. This allows all necessary dental treatment to be completed in a single session while the child sleeps comfortably. The facility includes a dedicated recovery room and experienced staff who understand the specific needs of neurodivergent children during recovery.

This is not a service that a standard general dental practice can provide. General anaesthesia for children requires specialist facilities, a specialist anaesthetist, and a paediatric dentist trained in managing complex cases - all of which are available at Smile Solutions CBD.

The CDBS - Financial Support for Families

Eligible children aged 0-17 may access up to **\$1,095.60** in dental benefits over two consecutive calendar years through the Child Dental Benefits Schedule (CDBS). The Tooth Fairy Centre accepts CDBS at all 7 locations across Melbourne, helping families of neurodivergent children access the specialist care they need.

Every Child Deserves Dental Care That Understands Them

Neurodivergent children are not difficult patients - they are children who experience the world differently, and they deserve dental care that respects and accommodates those differences. The Tooth Fairy Centre exists to provide exactly that: specialist paediatric dentists with the training, patience, and clinical skill to ensure every child receives the dental care they need, in a way that works for them.

Visit [\[toothfairy.com.au\]\(https://toothfairy.com.au\)](https://toothfairy.com.au) to learn more or book an appointment at any of our 7 Melbourne locations.