

Behavior Management Methods



Behavior management methods in pediatric dentistry are directed toward the goals of communication and education. A positive relationship between the dentist and child is built through an ever-changing process and is our foremost goal. Some of the techniques we use to achieve this are as follows:

Tell-Show-Do

Tell-Show-Do is an extremely common method of behavior shaping used by many professionals who work with children. TELL: words to describe procedures in language appropriate to the level of understanding for each child; SHOW: demonstration of the procedure in a carefully defined, non-threatening setting; and DO: complete the procedure without deviating from the explanation and demonstration.

Voice Control

Voice control is a controlled alteration of voice volume, tone, or pace to influence and direct the child's behavior. It is indicated for the uncooperative or inattentive patient to gain attention and compliance, avert negative or avoidance behavior, and establish authority. It is not used with children who due to age, disability, or emotional immaturity are unable to understand or cooperate. Once the desired behavior is achieved, it is rewarded and positively reinforced. Please understand, at no time is it to be construed as being "angry" at the child.

Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement is a technique by which desired behaviors are rewarded through feedback from the authority figure to strengthen the recurrence of those desired behaviors. Social reinforcers include positive voice modulation, facial exertion, verbal praise and appropriate physical demonstrations of affection by all members of the dental team. Non-social reinforcers are toys and stickers.

Distraction

Distraction is the technique of diverting the child's attention from what may be perceived as an unpleasant procedure.

Nitrous Oxide/Oxygen Inhalation

Nitrous oxide/oxygen (also known as "laughing gas") is a pharmacologic agent that is safe and effective at assisting behavior management techniques in certain patients. It also may provide an additional level of anesthesia for some patients. It easily induced and is completely reversible within about 5 minutes.

Conscious Sedation

Various medications can be administered to a patient in an attempt to alter their consciousness level. This does not make the child "go to sleep," but makes him/her less aware of what is happening and subsequently, not as anxious or apprehensive toward dental treatment. There are several levels of sedation that can be achieved, but since every child is different, these levels are somewhat difficult to predict. There are also several requirements that must be met before sedation can be a successful management option.

Physical Restraint

Partial or complete physical immobilization of the patient sometimes is necessary to protect the patient and/or the dental staff from injury during care. Restraint is never used as a punishment nor is it used for the convenience of the office personnel but to get treatment completed and completed safely.

General Anesthesia

General anesthesia is an induced state of unconsciousness and is performed with the appropriate medical staff present. This form of management is utilized for patients who require extensive treatment or are either medically or emotionally unable to have the treatment performed safely and adequately in the dental office setting.

If you have any questions, please call our office and speak with a team member: **503-363-5865**

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