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.

UNDERSTANDING NEURODIVERSITY AND SENSORY SENSITIVITY: EMPOWERING INCLUSIVE ORAL CARE THROUGH ACCURATE INFORMATION

In today's dental practice, inclusivity is not just an ideal—it's a clinical imperative. Many of your patients experience the world differently due to neurodivergent conditions such as autism, ADHD, sensory processing differences, dyslexia, and more. As a healthcare provider, your approach significantly impacts the comfort, trust, and overall experience of patients, especially neurodivergent individuals, many of whom experience heightened sensory sensitivity. Sensory sensitivity also may show up alongside other care barriers, such as language access or trauma history, requiring flexible, person-centered support.

Emerging understanding of neurodiversity is challenging outdated stereotypes that have impacted the treatment of neurodivergent individuals in health settings, including dental care.

As part of the Sensodyne Sensory Inclusion Initiative, this guide helps dental professionals recognize and address common misconceptions while creating a more supportive, accessible environment for every patient.

NEURODIVERGENCE HAS ALWAYS EXISTED

- **Increased diagnoses reflect progress.**
  The rise in diagnoses for neurodivergent conditions like autism, ADHD, and dyslexia reflects improved awareness, screening, and access to care — not a surge in prevalence.[1]
- **Neurodivergent people have always been part of our communities.**
  What's changing is our ability to meet their needs, not the existence of these conditions.

PROMOTING ACCURATE INFORMATION

- **Neurodivergence is a strength.**
  Neurodivergence is a natural variation in how one experiences and processes the world that may include both challenges and strengths. To try and change behavior to fit neurotypical experiences and processes often does more harm than good and can lead to masking (or the hiding of natural behaviors to fit social expectations),[2] burnout and additional mental health distress.

1. ASAN Statement on Updated Autism Diagnosis Numbers Amidst Attacks on Autistic People (April 2025)
2. Autism in Adulthood: "Masking Is Life": Experiences of Masking in Autistic and Nonautistic Adults (2021)

- **False claims can lead to real harm.**
  Misconceptions about causes (e.g., poor parenting, diet, vaccines) and "treatments" (like unproven detox therapies) can undermine patient trust and delay needed care.[3]

SUPPORTING NEURODIVERGENT PATIENTS IN PRACTICE

- **Neurodiversity includes a wide range of sensory and communication preferences.**
  Some patients may be hypersensitive to light, sound, taste, or texture. Others may process instructions differently or need more time to respond.
- **Simple accommodations make a big difference.**
  Noise-canceling options, flexible scheduling, visual aids, and clear communication techniques can reduce stress and improve care outcomes.

WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NEURODIVERGENT COMMUNITY

- **Listen to and learn from the real-world experiences of neurodivergent patients.**
  Prioritize resources created by neurodivergent individuals and organizations. A great place to start is with this article, **"3 ways to create sensory-friendly dental experiences for neurodivergent patients,"** authored by Burnett Grant, an agender, asexual, raceless autistic person.
- **Stay Connected to Industry Resources.**
  We encourage dental professionals to learn more about how to support patients with sensory sensitivity by participating in the CERP certified **Neurodiversity Training: Sensory Sensitive Dentistry from the American Dental Association** (6 CE credits). The course features content from sensory accessibility experts, KultureCity, and dental professionals who complete the course are eligible to receive the Sensodyne x KultureCity Sensory Inclusive™ Certification.

  Learn more at **sensodyne.com/sensoryinclusioninitiative**

3. US FDA: Beware of Be Aware of Potentially Dangerous Products and Therapies that Claim to Treat Autism