

Autism Speaks provides sleep strategies and dental treatment tool kits

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Autism Speaks, North America's leading autism science and advocacy organization, today released the Sleep Strategies for Children with Autism: A Parent's Guide and Treating Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Tool Kit for Dental Professionals, both available for free download on Autism Speaks Tools You Can Use webpage.

Many children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have difficulty falling asleep and/or staying asleep through the night, so sleep experts in Autism Speaks Autism Treatment Network (ATN) and the companion Autism Intervention Research Network on [Physical Health](#) (AIR-P) have addressed how to help improve sleep for children and teens affected by ASD. The Sleep Strategies Guide helps families select ideas that have the best potential to work well with their lifestyle. It recommends that families implement their sleep plan when they have the time and energy to see if it will work, trying one small change, and then slowly incorporating other changes. With consistent routines and persistent effort, families often see changes in their child's [sleep patterns](#) over several weeks.

"If your child or teen with ASD has difficulty sleeping or staying asleep, know that you are not alone," said Autism Speaks Vice President of Clinical Programs Clara Lajonchere, Ph.D. "The goal of the 'Sleep Strategies' tool kit is to empower families with effective strategies to create less stressful, more effective and consistent routines that can significantly improve quality of life for both the child with autism and their families."

Individuals with ASD may present with dental conditions resulting from behaviors associated with ASD or diets often higher in carbohydrates which can lead to [dental decay](#). ATN dentists and therapists developed the Tool Kit for Dental Professionals after observing that dentists, despite being well-versed in strategies for treating children, often feel unprepared for interacting with patients with the special sensitivities and medical issues often associated with autism. Recognizing the need for dental professionals to have the most up-to-date information about individuals with [ASD](#) and how to facilitate a successful office visit for children with autism, this new Tool Kit for Dental Professionals helps [dentists](#), dental hygienists and their office staff better serve the needs of this growing patient population using behavioral approaches. The companion Dental Guide, which provides important information about oral health and dental hygiene for families, previously published by Autism Speaks is also found on the Tools You Can Use webpage.

"By bringing the Tool Kit for Dental Professionals to the attention of their [family](#) dentist, families can help dental professionals stay up to date on [autism spectrum disorders](#) and help make visiting the dentist a positive experience for their child," says ATN Medical Director Dan Coury, M.D. "Families may also find its information helpful in managing situations inside the dentist office and beyond," he adds. "The recommendations in this tool kit are for behavioral issues that can appear in a variety of situations, including going to the doctor, visiting other unfamiliar settings or simply trying to follow a certain time schedule."

The ATN tool kits were inspired by the success of the popular Autism Speaks 100 Day Kit for newly-diagnosed families. In 2011, ATN and AIR-P published the first of its tool kits to provide guidance to families and providers. Taking the Work Out of Blood Work: Helping Your Child with an Autism Spectrum Disorder – A Parent's Guide" and the companion provider's guide offer clear guidance for families and medical providers to help make necessary medical procedures less

stressful. The ATN and AIR-P also produced the Medication Decision Aid Tool Kit to help families understand more of the choices and considerations involved in considering medications in collaboration with their child's doctor. These tool kits are free of charge and available to download at Tools You Can Use. Additional tool kits in development are also listed there.

Development of these tools is the product of on-going activities of the Autism Treatment Network, a funded program of Autism Speaks, and its participation as the [Autism](#) Intervention Research Network on Physical Health (AIR-P). AIR-P is supported by cooperative agreement UA3 MC 11054 through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Research Program to the Massachusetts General Hospital.

More information: www.autismspeaks.org/

Provided by Autism Speaks

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