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World of Possibilities

MAGAZINE

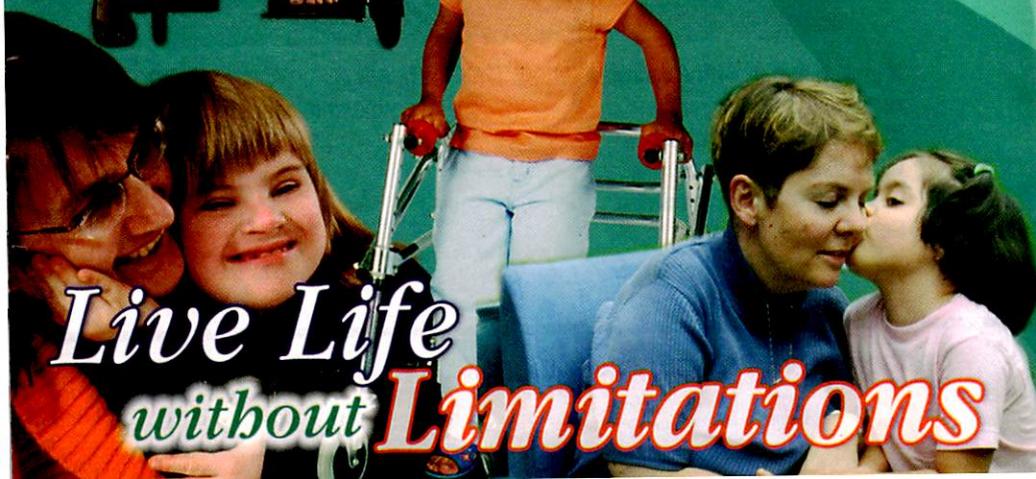
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Local Disabilities Community



Maryland State Fairgrounds
World of Possibilities
DISABILITIES EXPO
October 5 - 6, 2011

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Don't Let the Toothache Make Your Decision: Complete Dental Care for All

by Harvey Levy, DMD, MAGD, LLSR: www.DrHLevyAssoc.com

For the millions of people who avoid going to the dentist for routine care, "fear and finances" are the most typical reasons given. When people moan that dental care is expensive, I say that neglect is far more expensive. When they confess that they are fearful, I suggest commonly used means of controlling that fear. With our current resources and technology, no one should be denied routine dental care, whether the patient is disabled or not. Don't let today's neglect become tomorrow's emergency: prevent it by visiting the dentist regularly.

Not all anxious people are special-needs patients, but all special-needs patients are anxious. The anxiety may be due to irrational fears, panic attacks, severe gagging, infant fears, Alzheimers, autism, and physical or mental challenges. Medicines can help in most of these cases.

There are many sedation medicines that can reduce mild anxiety. They can come in the form of pills (Valium®, Halcion®, Ativan®), liquids (Chloral Hydrate®, Atarax® or Versed®), or laughing gas (nitrous oxide).

To deal with greater anxiety, IV (intravenous) sedatives can make the patient comfortable and forgetful of the experience.

Beyond that, there is complete general anesthesia, wherein the patient is totally asleep while all the work – sometimes a lot of it! -- is completed. This may be performed in a dental office, or in the operating room of a surgical center or hospital.

Patients with certain medical conditions are unable to sit still in the dentist's chair. Most can be successfully and comfortably be treated under sedation, as described above. Other patients may also need Velcro wraps and mouth props, which help reduce hand and body movements and help keep the mouth open. Many dentists have these available in their offices. If sedation, wraps and props fail, the patient can

always be treated while asleep. The operating room is always successful in cases of extreme anxiety or agitation.

Access to care is sometimes an obstacle. ADA architectural codes ensure that patients can always get into the office building. Some offices have dental chairs that move to the side with hovercraft technology, so the patient can remain in the comfort of their own wheelchair or gurney. Dental x-rays are now easier than ever before. Digital imaging enables immediate viewing and instant retakes if needed. Hand-held portable 5 lb. x-ray units now allow radiographs to be taken anywhere, be it in a dental office, a nursing home, a private home, an institution, or a hospital.

Cost of treatment may be a concern, but not always a barrier. Financial arrangements can often be made using payment plans or creative financing options.

If you don't go in for routine car maintenance, you're far more likely to have a major problem down the road. Whatever the reason to avoid the dentist, it pays off to prevent today's neglect from becoming tomorrow's crisis. Visit your dentist regularly.

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