



Chestnut Dental Publishes Parent Guide to Recognizing Child Dental Anxiety

September 04, 2026

NEEDHAM, MA - September 04, 2026 -

Chestnut Dental Associates, P.C. has published parent guidance on recognizing dental anxiety in children, released on August 7, 2026, to help families distinguish anxiety from ordinary misbehavior before dental appointments. The practice produced the guidance in response to a pattern its pediatric team observes regularly, in which parents interpret a child's fearful reactions as defiance rather than distress.

The guidance identifies several behavioral markers parents can watch for. It describes crying that escalates as the appointment date approaches, a child's refusal to leave a parent's side in the waiting room, and direct statements from the child about expecting pain. It also notes physical complaints such as stomachaches or headaches that surface on the day of a scheduled visit. According to the practice, these signals often go unread because they resemble everyday reluctance.

The distinction the guidance draws is one of persistence. According to the practice, these signs tend to persist and intensify as an appointment nears, which sets them apart from ordinary nervousness that passes

on its own. That difference, the guidance suggests, offers parents a practical way to gauge whether a child needs additional preparation and support.

The guidance also names common sources of the anxiety. It points to a prior negative experience at a dental office, unfamiliarity with what an appointment involves, and fear absorbed from family members or from how dentistry is portrayed in media. The practice notes that a child who hears a parent describe their own dental fear may take on that same fear, making household conversation a factor parents can shape.

On preparation, the guidance describes an introductory visit with no treatment, during which a child meets the team and sees the room in advance. It recommends talking about the appointment in plain, matter-of-fact terms rather than reassurance-heavy language, and scheduling at the time of day when a child is most settled. The practice presents these as steps parents can take before a first or a return visit.

The guidance offers parents a framework for how to detect dental anxiety early, before it hardens into avoidance of care. Chestnut Dental's pediatric dentists hold board certification through the American Board of Pediatric Dentistry. The guidance also describes tell-show-do, a named technique in which the dentist explains an instrument, demonstrates it, and then uses it.

"Parents often arrive convinced their child is simply acting out, when what they are seeing is genuine fear," said Anne Hertzberg, D.M.D., pediatric dentist at Chestnut Dental. "The guidance was written to give families a vocabulary for those signals and a way to separate them from typical childhood reluctance."

"The behaviors described here follow a recognizable arc as an appointment approaches," added Hertzberg. "Naming that pattern is what allows a parent, or a Bedford MA dentist, to respond to it early rather than after a difficult visit."

Chestnut Dental Associates, P.C. is a dental care provider with offices in Needham, Bedford, and Franklin, Massachusetts. Serving the community since 1970, the group brings pediatric dentistry, orthodontics, and adult cosmetic dentistry together under coordinated care, with a team of specialists working across those disciplines.

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CHESTNUT DENTAL ASSOCIATES, P.C.

Chestnut Dental provides Pediatric, Orthodontic, and Adult Cosmetic Dentistry in a family-friendly setting. Evening, Saturday, and emergency care are available. Board-certified pediatric specialists and Invisalign or traditional braces for all ages.

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