**Transitioning Your Child From A Pediatric Office To An Adult Office:**

**Tips For Parents**

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**Finding a place that feels comfortable and like “home” can be difficult for parents with children who have special healthcare needs. This is common across all aspects of life: medical, academic, social and recreational. It should come as no surprise that this is particularly true when it comes to the dental home. ‘

Patients with special healthcare needs sometimes receive dental care in the same office throughout their entire lives. This is not always possible based on the specific dental needs of the patient and the services rendered by their provider.

Most people will transition from one dentist to another at some point their lives. Most frequently this will be the transition from a children’s dentist to an adult dentist sometime in their late teens to early twenties. This article has a few tips and pointers to help smoothly move from one dental home to another for parents that have a child with special healthcare needs.

1. **Talk about it openly with your child long before the transition happens.** For most patients with special healthcare needs, earlier is better. Casually broach the subject of change a few years, if possible, before your child will start seeing another provider. This allows your child to have time to adjust to the idea, before the idea becomes reality. It allows them time to ask questions and to get answers.
2. **Allow your child to visit their new dentist before the first treatment day.** Everybody loves a familiar face, particularly people that thrive in an environment of structure, organization, and minimal change. By visiting the new provider’s office before the treatment appointment, your child will become familiar with the new faces and the new space before they are actually the patient. Most circumstances are less intimidating when your child knows that *it*, whatever it may be, isn’t actually happening today.
3. **Mark the event as a celebration of new milestones.** This will direct the thinking and feeling by your child away from the idea that they are being punished, but rather that they have accomplished something new. This can even include the original dentist so that your child does not feel as if anyone is upset or left out of the decision making process. It also gives the original dentist the ability to encourage your child and to help transfer trust from the original to the new provider.
4. **Don’t just forward your records. Request that your new dentist talk to your original dentist.** As simple as this sounds it can be exceptionally helpful for the new provider in understanding your child when they have talked to, and can learn from, the previous provider. There is no sense in starting at ground zero or having the new provider blindly guessing or assuming your child’s likes, dislikes, fears, favorites or triggers. Helpful hints and histories shared between providers can make the transition much faster and smoother.
5. **Check out the Special Care Dentistry Association at** [**https://www.scdaonline.org/**](https://www.scdaonline.org/) **to find a provider near you.** As providers, we all have strengths and weaknesses. Not all providers are as comfortable or as effective as some at treating children and adults with special healthcare needs. This website will help you find a provider near you that enjoys and is looking forward to treating your child, no matter their age.