



YOUR CHILD'S FIRST DENTIST VISIT

Preparing your child for their visit

Children have no innate fear of dental treatment. The attitude a child develops about dentistry typically develops in the home. According to one clinical study, the fear most adults have of dentistry is based on what their parents told them. Meeting the dentist can become a happy adventure when the child is encouraged in a cheerful manner. Pleasantly explain the dentist's role in helping teeth stay healthy. Paint a friendly picture of the dentist. It is helpful to consult with the dentist about what to expect during your child's first appointment so you can then tell your child what to expect in exciting, simple terms.

Children's dental specialists, known as pedodontists or pediatric dentists who treat children want to make the child's first visit a happy experience. Some dentists give their new patients a short tour of the clinic. Others limit the first visit to a visual examination. Parents can explain this as a simple counting of the child's teeth. The extent of the first appointment depends on the patient, as well as the dentist.

Some dentists take x-rays or "pictures." Others like to clean the teeth on the first appointment. Children are usually delighted to learn that this will make their teeth bright and shiny. Fluoride may be applied on the teeth to prohibit decay. The dentist explains that this makes the teeth stronger, helping to prevent cavities.

The importance of early brushing

After a basic examination, a dentist will instruct the parent and child on proper home care. While it is important that the habit of daily brushing is instilled at an early age, it is necessary for the parent to give the child's teeth a thorough cleaning each night before bedtime. Brushing should start with the appearance of the first tooth and should be done at least twice a day. Your dentist may recommend a particular type of toothbrush or method, but generally a soft brush with straight bristles should be used in the direction of teeth growth. Brush down on the upper teeth, and up on the lower teeth, and use a scrubbing motion on the chewing surfaces. Remember to clean all accessible areas of the teeth. The best habit to establish is brushing immediately after eating. There is a wide variety of kid-friendly toothpastes available, often with more appealing flavors.

The dentist may also suggest a diet to reduce the possibility of decay. Between meal snacks should be discouraged, particularly those containing sugar and fermentable carbohydrates such as cookies. If the child doesn't live in a community where the water is fluoridated, or has not had the benefit of this since birth, supplemental fluoride vitamins may be recommended. Studies have shown that tooth decay is reduced up to 65 percent in communities with fluoridated water. Fluoride is just as important as a controlled diet, frequent brushing, and regular professional care.

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