



Oral Health for Kids

Dental Health Information Series



First Dental Visit

The ADA recommends that your child's first oral health visit take place at 12 months of age, or shortly after the eruption of the first baby teeth.

During your child's first or subsequent visits, the dentist may :

- Assess your child's risk of dental problems such as decay or crooked teeth
- Clean your child's teeth
- Apply a fluoride treatment
- Provide dental treatment
- Take an X-ray of your child's teeth
- Provide oral health care hygiene tips
- Refer your child to other dental specialists (such as a paediatric dentist or orthodontist)

It's important to start dental visits early and attend these regularly as directed by your dentist, rather than waiting for a painful and often costly problem to occur. Children who have regular check-ups and are comfortable with visiting the dentist tend to have fewer dental problems, and are less likely to be afraid of dental treatments.

Anxiety About Visits to the Dentist

Some children may feel anxious or frightened about visiting the dentist. Treat the appointment as an ordinary event rather than a "big deal". It may be helpful if your child sits on your lap during the check-up, instead of in the dental chair.

To prepare them for their first visit to the dentist it is a good idea to bring them along to your own dental check-up so they can watch what happens and get used to the surgery environment, the smells and the sounds. If they can see you being calm during an examination it will reassure them.

It is not uncommon for very young children to resist the dentist's attempts to look at their teeth – so it's important that you reassure your child and don't let your own dental fears or phobias affect them. Make sure your child is not tired or ill on the day of the appointment, and aim for morning appointments where possible.

Ensure you inform your dentist about any medical or psychological problems that your child may have before the visit.

Anaesthesia: If extensive dental treatment is needed for an anxious child, the dentist may suggest a general anaesthetic.

All treatment is done while the child is under the general anaesthesia. Modern anaesthesia is safe and effective but does pose some risks. Ask your dentist for more information.

For more information on oral health and looking after your mouth, visit www.dentalhealthweek.com.au

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