

When Should My Child Have The First Dental Visit?

There is an increasingly large amount of scientific evidence supporting that, children who see the dentist before their first birthday and on a regular basis thereafter, experience a decrease of dental cost over a lifetime by as much as 75 percent.

It make sense that it is less expensive and certainly more healthy for your child to be seen once every 6 months for the first 3 or 4 years of life, approximately 5 or 6 checkup visits, than for the child to have hundreds of dollars worth of dentistry at age 4 or 5. Therefore, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and the American Dental Association both recommend that children be seen before their first birthday or shortly after the first tooth erupts around 6 months of age. A good time is to have the first dental visit is in conjunction with the 6-month "well baby" check up with the pediatrician.

At this visit you can expect the dentist to do a thorough clinical examination of the mouth and surrounding structures, check for any abnormalities, explain what the parent can expect as far as the sequence of teeth appearing in the mouth and when they should appear. Also the dentist will discuss the proper use of fluoride in toothpaste, in vitamins or other supplements. The dentist or his staff will demonstrate the proper technique for cleansing an infant's teeth and gums, the type and size toothbrush to use, the proper toothpaste and the technique that makes this more comfortable for both the parent and the child.

There should also be a discussion of habits such as thumb and pacifiers, when they become harmful, and how to manage them. There should be a discussion of nursing, nursing bottles, Sippy cups and how to utilize these methods of feeding without causing undo damage to the

baby's teeth. A dentist will also discuss diet and the types of food that are most likely to cause damage to the teeth and how to manage them. This visit should also include a discussion of the proper means to care for a child who suffered trauma to the mouth, which is very common during the toddling period.

Probably, the most important aspect of this new baby visit is that it establishes a Dental Home for your child, provides you and your child an opportunity to become acquainted with the dentist, the staff and the facility. You will learn the philosophy of the Practice on important issues, such as, whether the office allows parents to accompany children on the dental visit and how the dentist and staff react to your child's needs. It is important that a child have a dental home so that a parent has a place to call upon should there be a need in the event of an emergency or just a simple question about the child's oral health. This early visit establishes a relationship with the dentist and his staff and if done at an early age the child will become acquainted with the facility and staff and will grow to enjoy future dental visits, instead of fearing dental visits.

Pediatric dentist, as Pediatricians, specialize in treating children and meeting their special needs. They, their staff and their offices are geared for children.

Pediatric dentist have attended at least two years of graduate training after dental school in order to obtain the skills necessary to provide the specialized treatment children require. They are also equipped to handle handicap and disable children and dealing with children who have special needs.

It is smart and economical to bring your children to the dentist at an early age and on a regular basis, particularly a pediatric dentist.

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