

Dental Care for Preschoolers

I want your child's visits to the Pediatric Dentist to be fun and positive. Every child deserves a Dentist who lays the foundation for a lifetime of good oral health.

Q. How often should preschoolers visit the Pediatric Dentist?

A. At these ages we recommend that your child's teeth be examined and cleaned every 6 months. During these visits we talk about: oral hygiene, fluoride, your child's diet and how it affects their teeth; and what you can expect in terms of growth and dental development. We also talk about habits such as thumb or finger sucking, and pacifiers.

Q. My preschooler has difficulty sitting still, how do you handle this?

A. We approach this together. For 2 and sometimes 3 and 4-year-olds, you and I sit facing each other in a knee to knee position supporting your child's head on my lap. Some children this age may want to sit in the dental chair and show us "how big they are" or they may sit after a little reassurance that they are safe and will be getting their teeth counted.

Q. What should we be doing at home?

A. Children need help brushing and flossing their teeth. I advise parents to brush and floss their preschooler's teeth. In fact, I recommend that parents take an active role in their child's oral hygiene regimen until they're 10 years old. Once your child can fully spit out in the sink you'll begin to use toothpaste, and only the smallest dab. Toothpaste tastes good but we only want it on teeth not in tummies.

Q. Are there any special dental issues to be aware of for my child?

A. Children love to explore whether they toddle, walk, run, climb, or jump, so the possibility always exists that teeth can get hurt. Falls from high chairs, strollers and shopping carts, as well as automobile accidents, are frequent causes of tooth and/or mouth injuries. The teeth most commonly hurt are the lower/upper front teeth. These teeth can be moved around or broken in all different ways. There's also the possibility that the gums, tongue, cheeks or lips may be bruised or cut.

Q. What should we do if an injury does occur?

A. A baby tooth that has been knocked out should not be put back into the mouth. (However, an adult tooth should either be replaced or put in milk as quickly as possible.) If anything like this ever happens, please contact us immediately or go to the emergency room. Also be aware that any child prone to seizures is at an increased risk for tooth and/or mouth injury. We have a handout for parents with specific guidelines on how to respond to a dental emergency.