



Frequently Asked Questions

When should my child first visit the dentist?

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends that a child be seen by his or her first birthday or within six months of the eruption of the first tooth. Habits such as nighttime bottle-feeding can lead to serious and expensive dental problems long before the child's third birthday. We view this appointment as an essential step in helping you prevent problems before they occur and an opportunity to introduce your child to a lifetime of happy, healthy dental visits. With proper home care, your child should not need to return to our office until he or she is three years of age. In that time, if you see something that may need our attention, we are always here to help you.

How often should my child visit the dentist?

The AAPD recommends a dental check-up every six months. Our SmileCheck visits are important because they give us an opportunity to monitor your child's growth, identify areas of decay, perform a soft tissue examination, scale and polish their teeth, take necessary x-rays, provide fluoride treatment, give oral hygiene instruction, and provide nutritional counseling and dental education.

Does my oral health influence my child's smile?

Yes, your oral health does influence your child's oral health. Most of the bacteria that colonize an infant's mouth come from the mother. So keep your mouth clean, and your child will benefit!

Another benefit of a clean mouth can be going to full term with your pregnancy. Recent studies have linked gum disease to preterm labor. We also observe that children who were "premies" have more risk for decay than full term babies.

When should I start brushing my child's teeth?

Before your baby's first tooth erupts, you should be wiping his or her gums with a soft washcloth after each meal. As soon as the first tooth appears, you may switch to an infant's toothbrush with extra soft bristles. Toothpaste should not be used until age two when your child is able to spit in the sink.

Why are baby teeth important?

In addition to enabling children to chew food and holding space for permanent teeth, baby teeth are the number one cavity risk indicator for permanent teeth. That means a child whose baby teeth have many cavities will likely become an adult whose permanent teeth do too—and vice versa.

My child has space between her baby teeth. Will she need braces?

Space between baby teeth is normal and even preferred. The space is needed by the permanent teeth when they erupt. If the baby teeth are crowded or no space exists, it is very likely that your child may need braces in the future. Our doctors will evaluate your child's development at every appointment and recommend the best time to start orthodontic treatment if it is needed.

Should I be concerned that my child sucks his thumb?

Finger or thumb sucking is a naturally soothing behavior. Most children stop this habit by age four with no serious consequences. We monitor your child's dental growth and development to ensure that no problems develop.

When will my child get their first tooth?

The first baby tooth to arrive is around six months of age and is usually a lower central (front) tooth. Don't worry if your child is a little early or a little late getting their first tooth, six months is just the average. Most children will have all their baby teeth (20 teeth!) in by age two and a half.

I dilute my child's juice with water. Does this make it okay for my child?

Cutting juice in half with water does very little to reduce your child's risk for cavities. It is more important to limit how long and how frequently your child drinks anything with sugar in it. Even natural sugar allows the bacteria to make acid, increasing the risk for cavities.

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