

Child dental tips

Get your baby's teeth examined.

Your child's first birthday is an excellent time to have his or her teeth examined, to diagnose and prevent any future oral disorders. Age one year is a good time to start weaning your baby from the bottle. If you notice problems with your child's teeth, such as discoloration, tell your dentist or your child's pediatrician, who will then make a referral to a dentist for follow up.

What will happen at the first dental visit?

The dentist or dental hygienist will examine your child's mouth. The examination will include the teeth, gums, tongue, lips and roof of mouth. Depending upon the child's age, number of teeth present and ability to cooperate, the dentist may order a few cavity-detecting X-rays, if decay is suspected. X-rays are also helpful in determining that your child's permanent teeth are developing normally. Your child may also have his or her teeth cleaned during that visit.

How can I prepare my child for his or her first dental visit?

Make sure your child looks forward to this first visit. Morning appointments are usually when children are most rested and cooperative. To alleviate any anxiety your child may have, you can play "dentist" by taking turns looking into each other's mouths with a flashlight or read your child a story about a trip to the dentist.



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What about accidents affecting a child's teeth?

With active children, trauma may result from accidents, such as jumping off a diving board, falling over a bike's handlebars, hitting a dashboard or tripping and falling. Bathtubs and coffee tables are often common trouble spots for young children's teeth. Teeth that sustain such injuries should be treated immediately by the dentist. In many cases, further injury or tooth loss can be prevented with prompt care.

Sometimes, very active children completely knock out a healthy tooth. If this happens to a permanent tooth, save the tooth and any fragments or gum tissue. Soak the tooth in milk until help can be found. If no milk is available, the life of the knocked-out tooth may be prolonged by keeping it moist with saliva by holding it under the tongue, or between the cheek and gum. The tooth may be put in water if milk or saliva is not available. In many cases, the tooth can be re-implanted successfully if help is obtained within the first hour. If a tooth is lost, your child may need corrective action. Teeth that are lost too soon can lead to spacing problems. For a tooth that is lost early, your child may need a procedure that maintains the tooth's space until the permanent tooth grows in.

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