Healthy Mouth Checklist

Make the first visit something for the child to look forward to. Today, dentistry for children is a fun and positively anticipated experience. Late morning appointments are usually when the child is most rested and cooperative. Do not attempt to bribe your child; instead, you might read your child a story about a trip to the dentist.

FOLLOW THESE TIPS TO HELP KEEP YOUR CHILD’S MOUTH HEALTHY.

Chances are you are interested in learning more about your child’s tooth development, and what you can do as a parent to ensure your child will grow up with a healthy smile. Here are answers to some of parent’s most commonly asked questions.

HOW CAN I PREPARE MY CHILD FOR A VISIT TO THE DENTIST?
- Make the first visit something for the child to look forward to. Today, dentistry for children is a fun and positively anticipated experience.
- Morning appointments are usually when the child is most rested and cooperative.
- Do not attempt to bribe your child; instead, you might read your child a story about a trip to the dentist, or you can play “dentist” with the child by taking turns looking into each other’s mouths with a flashlight.
- If your child asks a question you feel uncomfortable answering, you may respond, “I don’t know, let’s ask the dentist.” This keeps you from unnecessarily scaring the child; it also allows your child an active role in the appointment.

IMPORTANT CONCERNS

Baby bottle tooth decay is the leading cause of decay and tooth loss in very young children. To avoid this, do not put your baby to sleep with a bottle that contains any sticky or sugary substance like milk, fruit juice, formula, or other sweetened beverages. If the child must be put to sleep with a bottle, use plain water.

Another common occurrence with active children is accidents. Teeth that sustain 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 will have a healthy tooth completely knocked out. If this happens to a permanent tooth, save the tooth and any fragments or gum tissue. Soak the tooth in milk or water until help can be found. If no milk or water is available, the life of the knocked-out tooth may be prolonged by keeping it moist in saliva by holding it under the tongue, or between the cheek and gum. In many cases, the tooth can be put back in successfully, if you get help in the first hour.
BABY TEETH WILL BE LOST. WHY SHOULD THEY BE FIXED?

The baby (primary) teeth provide a foundation and guidance for the permanent (secondary) teeth. If a child has teeth that are improperly spaced or have a lot of decay, crowding, shifting, or poor oral habits, early treatment may be necessary to prevent more complicated treatment (like braces) in the future. Early tooth development also affects a child’s ability to eat, chew, form speech patterns, and swallow. This is especially important for your child’s sense of social confidence and self-esteem. If baby teeth are lost early, cosmetic appliances and space maintainers are available to replace them, or to provide space for the permanent teeth to come through.

WHEN SHOULD MY CHILD FIRST VISIT THE DENTIST?

Your child’s first birthday is a good time to seek a well-baby dental evaluation, to diagnose and prevent any future oral disorders. The age of one year is also a good time to begin weaning your child from the bottle.

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD KEEP A HEALTHY SMILE FOR A LIFETIME?

- As a parent, set an example by taking good care of your own teeth.
- Before your child’s teeth start to appear in the mouth, begin to massage the teeth and gums with your finger or a warm, wet washcloth or a small gauze pad.
- When the first baby teeth appear, floss and brush your child’s teeth until he is old enough to do this himself.
- Feed your child a balanced diet and offer healthy snacks.
- Ask your dentist about fluoride and other treatments that prevent cavities. Make sure your child has regular dental care throughout his or her development.