

# 5 Reasons Why Seeing the Dentist is So Important for Your Child

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## **Early Intervention Can Prevent Bigger Problems Later in Life**

Your child should see the dentist by their first birthday, or whenever the first tooth erupts. Usually between 6-12 months of age, the first tooth comes in. Your child should see the dentist to establish a dental home, receive a dental examination and preventive care information that can protect your child's teeth and smile into the future.

## **Tooth decay can happen very early in life (even in children still breast feeding)**

After the first teeth come in, at-will breast feeding should be avoided and additional sources of nutrition can be started. Avoid putting your child to sleep with a bottle containing anything other than water. Sugary drinks, like fruit juice, should be avoided or minimized to meal time only. "Sippy" cups follow the same rules as the bottle. Allowing your child to have at-will

access to a "sippy" cup (with anything other than water) dramatically increases the risk for tooth decay.

## **Bad habits can lead to tooth and jaw alignment problems**

Although thumb sucking is normal for infants, extended finger habits can cause misaligned teeth and even jaws. Most children stop thumb sucking by 24 months. We recommend evaluation by a dentist if the child is still thumb sucking beyond age 3. The dentist can recommend several ways to address a prolonged thumb habit.

## **Good oral hygiene starts now!**

One of the most common questions I receive as a dentist is "when should I start brushing my baby's teeth?" Start at birth. Clean your baby's gums with a soft infant toothbrush or cloth and water. When teeth erupt, brush twice daily with an infant toothbrush. For children less than 2 years

of age, use a pea-sized "smear" of non-fluoridated toothpaste to brush the teeth. You should perform or assist your child's toothbrushing. Young children do not have the manual dexterity (muscle coordination) to perform tooth brushing all on their own, although I do recommend encouraging their help.

## **Your dentist can help with many potential problems**

Prevention is the key concept in early dental care. Early childhood caries (previously known as baby bottle tooth decay) is a significant concern and major cause of infection, missed school, and hospital visits for young children. After your baby's diet includes anything other than breast-milk, the teeth are at risk for cavities (tooth decay).



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Early intervention leads to effective prevention of these significant risks. Your child's smile and bite are important to their physical and social development. Start developing good dental habits now with consistent visits to your dentist.



Who else wants a healthy smile?

*"Your child should see a dentist to establish a dental home, receive a dental examination and preventive care that can protect your child's teeth and smile into the future."*

If your child has not had a professional dental examination, call us today to schedule your first appointment!

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