

A Child's First Dental Visit

Regular dental visits are an important part of a child's oral health prevention program. Many parents begin the first dental visit around age three, when most of the baby teeth have erupted. Baby teeth are susceptible to decay as soon as they appear, so special care should be taken to keep them healthy. Early examination and preventive care will protect your child's smile now and in the future.

The Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (APD) recommends that a child's first visit coincide with when the first tooth comes in, usually between six and twelve months of age, but no later than one year of age.

Visits to the Dentist

Regular dental visits allow the dentist to evaluate the growth and development of your child's teeth and jaw, and assess any conditions that could be identified and addressed early. Your dentist will also provide you with information specifically designed to prevent tooth decay for your child.



Taking care of children's teeth from infancy should be part of their daily care.

How well you care for your children's teeth will affect their ability to grow up healthy. Children who visit the dentist at a young age are more likely to view visits as routine and will be less anxious during regular checkups. Regular dental visits in childhood can also provide a foundation for a lifetime appreciation of taking care of their oral health. Practicing good oral health habits in your family will help protect your children's teeth and will keep their bright smiles healthy for a lifetime.

For additional Smile Discoveries, go to www.deltadentalmn.org.



Tooth Position

Trying to determine if or when your child might benefit from orthodontic care (braces) is common. This should be discussed with a dentist. Consult with your dentist or orthodontist when your child is around age nine to ten years.

Tooth Timetable

Primary Teeth			
	Upper Teeth	Erupt	Shed
	Central incisor	8-12 mos.	6-7 yrs.
	Lateral incisor	9-13 mos.	7-8 yrs.
	Canine (cuspid)	16-22 mos.	10-12 yrs.
	First molar	13-19 mos.	9-11 yrs.
	Second molar	25-33 mos.	10-12 yrs.
	Lower Teeth	Erupt	Shed
	Second molar	23-31 mos.	10-12 yrs.
	First molar	14-18 mos.	9-11 yrs.
	Canine (cuspid)	17-23 mos.	9-12 yrs.
	Lateral incisor	10-16 mos.	7-8 yrs.
Central incisor	6-10 mos.	6-7 yrs.	
Permanent Teeth			
	Upper Teeth	Erupt	
	Central incisor	7-8 yrs.	
	Lateral incisor	8-9 yrs.	
	Canine (cuspid)	11-12 yrs.	
	First premolar (first bicuspid)	10-11 yrs.	
	Second premolar (second bicuspid)	10-12 yrs.	
	First molar	6-7 yrs.	
Second molar	12-13 yrs.		
Third molar (wisdom tooth)	17-21 yrs.		
	Lower Teeth	Erupt	
	Third molar (wisdom tooth)	17-21 yrs.	
	Second molar	11-13 yrs.	
	First molar	6-7 yrs.	
	Second premolar (second bicuspid)	11-12 yrs.	
	First premolar (first bicuspid)	10-12 yrs.	
	Canine (cuspid)	9-10 yrs.	
Lateral incisor	7-8 yrs.		
Central incisor	6-7 yrs.		

Delta Dental of Minnesota
3560 Delta Dental Drive
Eagan, MN 55122

www.deltadentalmn.org



A Guide to Children's Dental Health



DELTA DENTAL OF MINNESOTA

Baby Teeth—They’re Important!

Most children begin life with healthy teeth. The first primary (baby) teeth erupt at about six or seven months of age. Healthy baby teeth are important for chewing food, learning to speak clearly and developing good self esteem. Baby teeth also reserve space in the jaw so that permanent teeth can assume their correct position when they begin coming in around age six or seven.



Clean Teeth

Clean teeth are critical to your child’s dental health. The primary goal when cleaning teeth is to remove plaque, a collection of bacteria in the mouth that breaks down sugars and forms an acid. This acid causes tooth decay (also known as cavities). One complete cleaning should be done at least once a day.

A complete cleaning means brushing all four sides and the top of each tooth. Encourage your child to brush for two minutes each time he or she brushes. The best time to clean teeth is right before bedtime, but any regular, daily schedule is fine. You should start cleaning when the first tooth comes in at about six to seven months. Germs can easily form in a baby’s mouth even before the first teeth come in.

Always use a soft-bristle toothbrush that’s the appropriate size for your child’s mouth. Use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste and remember to teach your child to spit out the toothpaste. As your child grows, involve him or her in the selection of their toothbrush, floss and toothpaste. The more children participate in their oral health, the more likely they are to form lasting healthy oral health habits.

Healthy Diet

It is important to establish good eating habits for your child when your child is young. Choose foods from the five main foods groups: vegetables, fruits, meat, whole grains and dairy products.

Try to limit sugary foods to once or twice a day. The frequency of sugar on the teeth by eating or drinking continuously throughout the day is what can cause problems. Sugar in any form—bread, milk, fruits and vegetables—is used by plaque to form tooth decay-causing acid.

Do not allow your child to fall asleep with a bottle containing breast milk, formula, fruit juice or soda. For toddlers, limit juice or sugary drinks in the child’s “sippy” cup. Continuously bathing the teeth in sugary substances causes plaque to mature faster and make more acid. Encourage and offer your child lots of water.

Tooth Decay is Contagious

Tooth decay is an infectious disease that can spread from parents and caregivers to babies. Babies are not born with decay-causing bacteria in their mouths. Many unsuspecting parents and caregivers pass these bacteria onto children, because they can be spread from person to person. These bacteria can spread easily through common behaviors such as sharing cups, water bottles, toothbrushes and utensils; “cleaning” the pacifier with saliva, and allowing children to put hands into a parent’s or caregiver’s mouths and then into his or her own mouth. Once bacteria enters the mouth, they convert the sugar (especially sucrose) from foods and beverages into acids that destroy tooth enamel and produce cavities.



Fluoride

Fluoride comes in several forms and can be delivered in various ways (rinses, gels, varnishes, dietary supplements, etc.). The type, amount and method of application should be tailored to the needs of your child. Underuse and overuse can cause problems. Check with your dentist about your child’s needs.



Sealants

A sealant is a plastic film that is applied to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth. The plastic material bonds to the pits and fissures (grooves) in the teeth and acts as a barrier to protect the teeth from decay-causing bacteria. Sealants are recommended for children with newly erupted permanent first and second molars (*see Tooth Timetable*). These usually appear between the ages of six to twelve years. Applying sealants is painless and is a simple way to keep your children free from tooth decay. Talk to your dentist about whether your children would benefit from sealants.

Children and School

Tooth decay affects more children than any other chronic disease and affects their ability to learn and concentrate in school. Tooth decay occurs when bacteria found in the mouth convert sugar from foods or beverages into acid. These acids damage tooth enamel, the protective coating on the surface of the tooth. Tooth decay is an infection and can be painful if left without treatment. Children are not healthy and not ready for school if they have poor dental health. Make sure your children are ready for school and ready to learn.

Injuries

Trauma is the number one cause of dental emergencies. When teeth are knocked out, fractured or moved out of position, get to a dentist within 15 to 30 minutes. Chipped teeth are not usually considered true emergencies, but your dentist should evaluate the situation. Wearing a mouthguard when participating in any sport that could result in dental trauma is an important preventive step.

If a permanent tooth is knocked out, try to place it back where it was in the mouth. Rinse off any dirt first, but do not scrub the tooth. Avoid touching the root. If it’s not possible to return the tooth to the mouth, place it in milk or water. Get to the dentist as fast as possible. Baby teeth should not be replaced. If a child’s baby tooth is knocked out, save it and call your dentist.

Good Habits

Habits are formed at an early age. As a parent, you are the most important role model for your child, so consider making good oral health care a family practice. By providing proper instruction, monitoring, encouragement and a positive personal example, you can help your child develop and maintain a healthy mouth and a healthy attitude about the importance of dental care.