

Tips for parents on preparing for dental visits – Establishing a Dental Home

General thoughts:

DO NOT BRIBE YOUR CHILD – telling the child that if they are good you will buy a toy or go someplace special sets up their apprehension. They weren't worried before but now they are...

DO NOT TAKE YOUR CHILD TO YOUR DENTAL APPOINTMENT TO WATCH – this can be scary for the child because of sounds, smells, the possibility of blood when you get your teeth cleaned. We do things different in the pediatric dental office – it is a child friendly, and child centered space where we focus on them and make this as comfortable as possible. There are usually games to play, maybe cartoons to watch, etc. We and our staffs are there to keep your child as comfy as possible.

For children 2-4 years old:

1. Children feed off parent's emotions – if you are apprehensive try not to pass that emotion onto your child. Children may be cautious but will not be fearful if you aren't nervous, or worried.
2. Parents please **DOWNPLAY** the appointment. The Dentist is their friend, who will help reach Mommy and Daddy how to brush their teeth to get the “sugar bugs off”. The Dentist will also count their teeth. Make it sound like fun!
3. Less preparation the better. Role playing may be effective – let the child look at and brush their doll's teeth, stuffed animal, sibling or even the parent's teeth. There are plastic mirrors parents can buy at the store to show your child how the dentist will look at the teeth and their tongue, etc. Then show them how we count their teeth. Let them look at yours and get comfortable with it.
4. Read a book about going to the dentist. Just look for ones that focus on a cleaning and examination and not “fillings”.

For children age 1-2:

1. It is normal for a young child to cry, whine, wiggle, and otherwise not want to be laid down with a stranger (the pediatric dentist) looking at them. This is age appropriate. All children are different. The Pediatric Dentist and their staff are used to working with children and in fact, enjoy it. Let them be your guide. Often the parent will be asked to hold their child's hands for reassurance and to prevent the child from injuring themselves by reaching out for our dental instruments.
2. The younger the child is seen the better. This will provide your child with a “Dental Home” where all their needs, whether a periodic preventive visit or an emergency, will be taken care of. We recommend that this occurs at age one or when the first tooth is visible in the mouth, whichever comes first.
3. Look at this initial visit as you do a “well baby visit” at their physician. We are there to educate the parent on how to best care for their child's teeth, discuss diet, sucking habits, growth and development and analyze fluoride needs. These are all easy for the child to tolerate – your attitude sets the stage for your child.

4. This is a fact of life and is necessary. Do not allow your child to decide if they want to do this or not. Brushing their teeth and achieving optimum oral health is a very important part of overall health. A no-nonsense attitude from you will set the stage of what you expect and how together you can be a cavity free family! We are your coach, you are the quarterback and your child is a player. You are the leader – we will give you all the plays to help you achieve excellent oral health for your child!

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