



Parent Page

Be Child Aware:

Get Ready for a Good Dental Checkup!

Your dentist may want to see your child when her first tooth erupts. Other dentists may want to wait until her first birthday. Between visits, parents can help children learn about good dental health—learning with lasting benefits!

- **Model good dental hygiene for your child.**

Dentists suggest that you model choosing water instead of sweet drinks when you are thirsty. Let your child see you brush and floss regularly. Explain what you are doing. Let him watch you clean a pet's teeth. If your dentist agrees, let your toddler observe your dental checkup or an older sibling's (if the sibling is not fearful).

- **Start good habits early.**

Your baby can learn good dental habits long before she can clean her own teeth. Dentists suggest that parents wipe a baby's gums, tongue, and teeth once a day with a clean, soft, damp cloth, piece of gauze, or baby toothbrush. (Use only water until the dentist says you can switch to toothpaste.) Start flossing when two of the child's teeth touch. A toddler can brush with adult supervision when he is able to spit out toothpaste. Squeeze a pea-sized amount onto a child-size toothbrush for him. At first, you may need to gently guide his toothbrush to reach all the parts of his mouth.

- **Make dental health fun.**

Share picture books about teeth and dentists. Look at animal teeth in zoos and museums. Visit dental association Web sites, which often feature activities for children about dental health. Your child will need to open his mouth for the dentist. You can help him get used to doing so by playing "How Many Teeth?" and other "open mouth" games. A toddler or preschooler may want to pretend play "dentist's office."

- **Find a pediatric dentist or a family dentist who specializes in working with babies and children.**

Ask other parents for recommendations, or look in the phone book. Office staff should be willing to answer your questions over the phone. You might visit the office first by yourself to see what the office and staff are like.

- **Take it easy at the dentist's office.**

Bring along books and comfort toys. If you arrive a bit early, you and your child can look around and meet the staff. During the

checkup, your child will probably sit on your lap. (NOTE: Dentists and their staff have special words for what they do. They also know words to avoid, like pull, hurt, shot, needle, and drill! So they may want to explain equipment and procedures to a child, rather than having you do so.)

For more information about young children's dental health, try these resources:

Children's Oral Health

http://www.mndental.org/public_home/your_oral_health/childrens_oral_health

Head Start Dental Health Curriculum

<http://www.bmcc.org/Headstart/Dental>

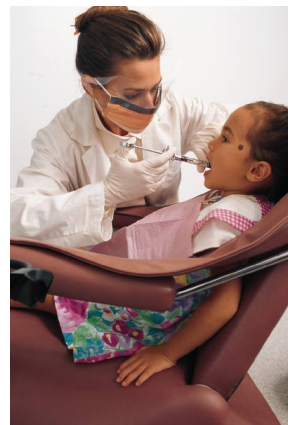
Pre-School Years Key for Healthy Smile, Says American Dental Association

http://www.ada.org/public/media/releases/0202_release07.asp

Brushing Up on Tooth Brushing

<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/nibbles/health-toothbrush.html>

Information obtained from: <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/dentist.htm>



For more information about Child Care in your area please call
1-866-269-3022



There are no charges/fees associated with a provider listing in the Child Care resource and referral database, or for parent referrals to a program. If you are asked to provide payment for a referral from the CCR&R database, please call the Office of Early Learning at 1-866-357-3239.