

When Should My Child First Visit the Dentist?

By Ashley Hineman, M.D.

Children, just like adults, should visit the dentist regularly. The first time your child should see their dentist should be when they turn one year old or within six months of getting their first tooth.

It is at this first visit that the dentist will lay the foundation of healthy dental habits. It is very important to clean your child's teeth daily once they get their first tooth. You may use a soft washcloth to gently wipe the teeth off in the morning and before they go to bed at night. After they get a few more teeth begin to use an infant toothbrush with soft bristles and brush teeth twice daily without toothpaste. You may begin to use toothpaste at one to two years old but make sure it is fluoride free until they are able to spit it out. Fluoride causes permanent staining on teeth and can also upset the stomach.

Your pediatrician should stress the importance of good dental hygiene and this includes stopping the bottle and pacifier after twelve months of age. It is also important that infant's still taking the bottle not be put to sleep at night with the bottle or be allowed to be fed by propping the bottle. These habits will increase your child's risk of developing dental cavities and ear infections, which can sometimes lead to hearing and speech delays.

Call your doctor if you have other questions regarding your child's dental health.

Additional Resources:

www.aap.org, www.healthychildren.org, <http://www.aapd.org/>

This article is for educational purposes only and should not be considered to be medical advice. It is not a substitution for a visit with your doctor. All medical information is incomplete without a physical exam, which isn't possible without a visit to your doctor. See your pediatrician if you have questions about dental hygiene.

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