

# When to bring your child to the dentist

**By Shawnell Miller**

Many parents dread taking their child to the dentist, but stressful appointments can be avoided if you get them started early. Regular dentist visits will build good oral habits at a young age and may prevent your child from struggling with dental disease and pain later.

Your child should visit the dentist when their first tooth erupts or by age one. This early exam and preventive care will help protect your child's teeth now and into the future.

Continue regular check-ups every 6 months. This will help your dentist find any little problems early before they become a big problem. These visits help your child become more comfortable with going to the dentist and reduces anxiety during dental visits.

There are times we may question ourselves as parents on whether to bring our child to the dentist in between their regular check-ups. When in doubt, it is always better to have your child see the dentist to rule out problems, but here are some tips about common issues and when you need to make an appointment.

## **Teething**

Teething can be painful for your child from the eruption of their first tooth to getting their last tooth. The average age the first tooth erupts is typically between 6 and 12 months. If your baby still does not have any teeth by the age of 18 months, it is time follow-up with the dentist.

Normal teething symptoms include fussiness, trouble sleeping, irritability, loss of appetite and drooling more than usual. What is not normal is a fever, diarrhea and a rash. If your baby has any of these symptoms while teething and continues to be cranky and uncomfortable, call your pediatrician.

## **Permanent teeth**

When your child starts getting their permanent teeth around age 6 or 7, it usually happens without much difficulty. Sometimes, a permanent tooth may start to erupt before losing the baby tooth. In these cases, see your dentist. They may need to help get the baby tooth out so there will be room for the permanent one to come in.

Ask your dentist about sealants to help prevent cavities when the permanent first and second molars have fully erupted around ages 6 and 12.

## **Toothaches**

Signs of a toothache can include complaining of pain in a tooth, temperature sensitivity when drinking or eating cold or hot foods and drinks, swelling around a tooth, gum, or face, facial discomfort, changing in eating habits, behavioral changes (fussiness, irritability), unexplained fever and waking up in the night with tooth pain.

## **Injuries**

You should bring your child to the dentist immediately if they experience any significant mouth trauma like a knocked-out tooth, a broken tooth, severe swelling, heavy bleeding that doesn't stop, a displaced tooth, a deep cut inside the mouth or any extreme pain.

Making sure to establish a dentist early on for your child gives your child a familiar dental home and a place to call if a dental emergency arises between checkups. This can help ensure a healthy and pain-free mouth for your child, and brighter smile too.

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