**KIDS DENTISTRY**

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**Regular check-up and cleans for kids**

When your child visits a pediatric dentist at an early age you have the opportunity to take the fear out of them of a dental office. Our pediatric dentists are trained to help children relax and children learn that visiting the dentist is a routine event and not something to worry about. It is much easier for the dentist to fix a small issue than a major issue in such small children. An early introduction to the dental office will also help your child learn proper oral hygiene from the beginning. These habits may stay with your child for the rest of his or her life.

**Dental cleanings**

Once the child is comfortably seated on the dental chair the dentist will examine his/her teeth for tooth decay, plaque, malocclusions as well as the gums, cheek and tongue for any abnormalities.

* If the child requires a clean up to be done the dentist will go ahead and use special tools to first manually scrape away the tartar.
* Next they will use a rotary instrument which will vibrate and release a jet of air and water to loosen and clean away hardened plaque from tooth surfaces.
* Finally the dentist will run a rotary brush and gently polish the tooth surfaces and finish with fluoride varnish

**When should my child first visit the dentist?**

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics it’s time for your baby to see the dentist for the first time when their first tooth becomes visible or when they reach 12 months of age. Before the eruption of teeth it is recommended to gently wipe your infant’s gums with a wet washcloth to keep the gums healthy. Once the teeth start to come in you can begin brushing their teeth with a fluoride free toothpaste. Since infants and toddlers cannot control their swallowing reflex it is advised to use fluoride free tooth pastes to avoid excess ingestion of fluoride as this can have toxic effects in the body. The child usually has a full set of teeth in their mouth by the time they turn 3.

To create good oral habits and to avoid developing a fear of the dentist it is better to introduce the child to the dentist early. Here are the following topics that you can discuss with your pediatric dentist:

* Teething
* Brushing techniques
* Bite (how your children’s teeth come together)
* Habits such as thumb sucking
* The risk of tooth decay and how to prevent it
* Prevention of any traumatic injury to your child’s mouth
* Nutritional advice

**What to expect at your child’s appointment?**

On your child first appointment, the dentist can use one of many ways to get the child comfortable on the chair. This depends on the age of the child as well the nature of their visit. If the child is in pain then it might not be a very pleasant first time experience for the child. On a regular first visit the child will first be made comfortable on the dental chair.

If the child is old enough, the dentist will introduce them self and ask the child to do the same. The child will then be asked about why they are there and if they are experiencing any discomfort in their mouth.

Once the child is comfortable he will then be asked if the dentist can use a mirror and look in the mouth and do a clinical exam or check-up.

The dentist or hygienist might place your child on a table or exam chair or have you hold your child on your lap during the exam. Then the dentist or hygienist will likely:

* Evaluate your child's oral hygiene and overall health, drinking and eating habits, and risk of tooth decay
* Remove stains or deposits on your child's teeth by gently scrubbing with a wet toothbrush or wet cloth.
* Demonstrate proper cleaning techniques.
* Assess how much fluoride your child is getting through diet and use of oral hygiene products and, if necessary, prescribe a fluoride supplement or apply a topical fluoride treatment to your child's teeth
* Check for sores or bumps on your child's tongue, inside the cheeks, and on the roof of the mouth
* Evaluate the impact of habits such as pacifier use and thumb sucking.

After the exam, the dentist or hygienist will discuss your child's oral health, including your child's risk of tooth decay, other oral health concerns, and preventive measures you can take to improve and protect your child's oral health.

The dentist or hygienist will also recommend when to return for a follow-up visit which is usually after every 6 months. If your child is at high risk of tooth decay or has other oral health concerns, more-frequent checkups might be suggested.

**Dental treatments for children**

The following dental treatments are performed on children:

* Fluoride application
* Fissure sealants
* Dental cleaning and polishing
* Space maintainers
* Mouth guards
* Fillings
* Pulpotomy/ pulpectomy
* Extractions