

Tips for your child's first dental visit

- If possible, schedule a morning appointment when children tend to be rested and cooperative. Don't schedule during nap time.
- Stay positive. Don't show any anxiety that you might feel about dental visits.
- Never bribe your child to go to the dentist or use the visit as a punishment or threat.
- Make your child's dental visit an enjoyable outing. Teaching your child good oral hygiene habits early can lead to a lifetime of good dental health.



Prevention is the key to a healthy smile!

Don't wait to take your child to the dentist until pain or a dental emergency happens. Regular dental exams and professional cleanings can help your child have a lifetime of healthy smiles.

In this brochure:

- Why it's important to schedule your child's first dental visit before their first birthday
- When to expect your child's baby teeth to come in, fall out
- How to prevent tooth decay in baby teeth
- Tips on making the first dental visit a positive one for your child

ADA Healthy Smile Tips

- Brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.
- Clean between your teeth daily.
- Eat a healthy diet that limits sugary beverages and snacks.
- See your dentist regularly for prevention and treatment of oral disease.

For more information about taking care of your mouth and teeth, visit MouthHealthy.org, the ADA's website just for patients.



Produced in cooperation with the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry

Initial decay photo courtesy of David M. Hassan, DMD.



Parents

Your Child's **First** Visit to the Dentist



ADA American Dental Association®

America's leading advocate for oral health

First visit by first birthday

One of the most important things you can do to set up your child for a lifetime of healthy smiles is to start dental visits early. **The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and the ADA recommend that your child's first visit to the dentist happen when their first tooth appears but no later than their first birthday.**

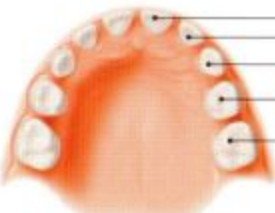
This first visit is a "well-baby checkup" for your child's teeth. It's best for your child to have a pleasant first meeting with the dentist. Don't wait until an emergency comes up to introduce them to the dental office!


Baby teeth development

Babies are born without teeth. Usually, baby teeth (also called **primary** teeth) start to appear in the mouth when the child is 6 months old. By their third birthday, most children have a full set of 20 baby teeth.

The chart below shows when baby teeth come in (erupt) and when they fall out (shed). Baby teeth be will replaced by adult (**permanent**) teeth. However, not all children get the same teeth at the same times. Your child's teeth may come in earlier or later than the times shown here.

Baby (Primary) Teeth

	Upper Teeth	Erupt	Shed
	Central incisor	8-12 mos.	6-7 yrs.
	Lateral incisor	9-13 mos.	7-8 yrs.
	Canine (cuspid)	16-22 mos.	10-12 yrs.
	First molar	13-19 mos.	9-11 yrs.
	Second molar	25-33 mos.	10-12 yrs.

	Lower Teeth	Erupt	Shed
	Second molar	23-31 mos.	10-12 yrs.
	First molar	14-18 mos.	9-11 yrs.
	Canine (cuspid)	17-23 mos.	9-12 yrs.
	Lateral incisor	10-16 mos.	7-8 yrs.
	Central incisor	6-10 mos.	6-7 yrs.

It's important to start dental visits early for your child

- **Your child's dentist can show you how to clean your child's teeth, talk about feeding, oral habits, and recommend dental care products.** They also can help you make sure your child is getting the right amount of **fluoride (FLOOR-eyed)**, a natural mineral that protects teeth. They can also answer questions about your baby's teeth.
- **Having a well-baby checkup at this age also connects your child to a dental home.** This is a place where you can take your child from year to year. This helps the dentist get to know your child's and family's needs, so your child will have the best care.
- **If your child is a toddler, the dentist will gently examine their teeth and gums to look for decay and other problems.** The dentist may also clean their teeth. Your toddler can also be checked for problems related to habits such as thumb or finger sucking.
- **Fluoride treatments and dental sealants** are 2 important ways your dentist can prevent cavities. Dental sealants are a coating that the dentist puts on the grooves of your child's back teeth to protect them from decay. Your dentist will let you know if these treatments are right for your child.

Baby teeth can start to decay as soon as they appear

Other than water, sugar is in almost everything else that a baby drinks, including 100% juices, breast milk, and formula. Acid from sugary foods and drinks can attack teeth for 20 minutes or longer. When teeth are in contact with liquids that contain sugar, decay can start.

You can prevent decay in your child's teeth

Pacifiers:

- Don't put a pacifier or spoon in your mouth before giving it to your child. Decay-causing bacteria that's in your mouth can be passed to them.
- Don't dip a pacifier or nipple of a bottle in anything sweet.

Bottles, Sipping and Snacking:

- Don't give your baby fruit juice until after they turn 1 year old.
- Don't let your child sip sugary liquids all day (including juice drinks). Limit sugary liquids and sweets to mealtimes.
- Never put your child to bed with a bottle or training cup.
- Avoid giving your child sugary, chewy, sticky foods like candy, cookies, chips, and crackers. Give healthy snacks instead.

Breastfeeding:

- After each time you breastfeed, wipe your baby's gums with a clean, moist gauze pad or washcloth.
- Once your child's first tooth comes in, be sure to brush their teeth after each feeding.

Decay in Baby Teeth

If decay is not treated, it can destroy baby teeth.



Healthy baby teeth



Initial decay



Moderate to severe decay



Moderate to severe decay



Severe decay