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When Should I Bring My Child for Their First Visit to the Dentist?

When it comes to first dental visits, it's always best to start early. The American Dental Association (ADA), American Academy of Pediatric Dentists (AAPD), and American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) all recommend having the first dental appointment and establishing a "dental home" around the time they turn one, or even earlier if they have their first tooth. Specialty trained pediatric dentists can also help if your newborn or baby demonstrates challenges with nursing or eating. Early establishment of your child's dental home is ideal to create healthy relationships with the dental team and allows us to provide valuable information on healthy dental care at home. Establishing a dental home is ideal in the event an unexpected dental emergency occurs.

What Should I Expect at My Child's First Dental Appointment?

The first thing we'll do during the visit is spend a few minutes getting to know you and your child and discuss what will happen during the appointment. After reviewing any concerns and sharing important educational information, we'll perform a gentle examination of your child's mouth and "count their teeth". During this examination, we'll look for any signs of tooth decay, soft tissue restrictions, or atypical dental development. This can help us prevent, or sometimes reverse, the early stages of tooth decay or suspected challenges without the need for invasive treatment.

Dr. Renee and our dental team will go over various ways to keep your child's oral health at an optimal level. We will provide age-appropriate guidance regarding proper oral/dental care, habits that impact dental health, and proper diet and nutrition. We will also provide information on your child's oral and dental development and the best ways to prevent tooth decay. During the examination we will determine if possible dental development concerns or dental decay is present. If any treatment is needed, we'll explain what procedures are necessary, how they're performed, and why we recommend them. At the end of the appointment, we will schedule a visit to address your child's needs or a follow-up visit in six months.

How Can I Prepare My Child for Their First Dental Appointment?

Creating a positive attitude toward your child's dental visit is the first step for ensuring a healthy relationship with the dental team and provides best outcome for your child to have a great experience. If your child has experienced anxiety in new settings or with new people, we welcome you to visit with your child for a tour before their initial exam. Meeting the team and Dr. Renee can put them at ease and get them ready for their first visit. We also encourage parents to stay with their children during the actual visit to provide a familiar and reassuring presence.

Prepare your child by talking to them about what to expect. We recommend using lighthearted language and suggest you not make too big of a deal of it. The parents should not express nervousness; children tend to pick up on this and it can make them anxious as well. Let your child know that we'll simply be looking inside his or her mouth to count their teeth and we'll also spend some time talking to both of you. It may be helpful to bring a snack, a toy, or something that will help ease your child's mind during the visit.

We ask that you refrain from using words around your child that might cause unnecessary fear, such as "needle," "shot," "pull out," "drill," or "hurt." Dr. Renee and our team make a practice of using words that convey the same message without frightening your child.