

Take Care of Those Tiny Teeth

Your child probably cried when his/her first teeth came in. He/she may have even run a small fever. Your child went through a lot of work to get those teeth to poke through, so be sure you take care of them!

Your child should have his/her first dental appointment by the time he/she turns 1. This seems early until you learn that tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease in the United States. Tooth decay is painful, and, as your child gets older, it can cause trouble concentrating, difficulty eating, weight loss, poor speech development, and disrupted sleep. That's why it's important to start dental care early.

Where to go

- Your family dentist or a pediatric dentist
- A dental screening at your child's school, Head Start, or early childhood family education program
- Your local Child & Youth Councils or Early Childhood Initiatives
- Your child's primary care provider may also be able to offer a basic oral health screening and provide fluoride varnish for your child's teeth

What to expect

Your child's first dental screening will likely be a short visit. Your child will get the chance to get used to the dentist and the new environment. The dentist will examine your child's teeth and bite, and look for potential problems with the gums, jaw, and oral tissue. He/she will clean your child's teeth and will likely discuss oral health with you.

Topics may include the following:

- Best practices for good oral hygiene
- Fluoride treatment
- Teething
- Oral habits (for example, thumb sucking)
- Proper nutrition

He/she will also discuss how often your child should come in for dental appointments.

Get your child to the dentist early to avoid oral health problems and help your child establish good oral hygiene habits early.

Sources: Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors, WebMD

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