

First dental visit by first birthday!

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The Canadian and the Ontario Dental Association recommend that children visit the dentist within six months of their first tooth appearing or by their first birthday. The first appointment is for both the parent and the child. We recommend that your child visit the dentist before a problem arises. It is hard to imagine that a dental problem could occur in a child as young as six months of age but baby's first teeth are susceptible to decay. Any liquids other than water that are in contact with baby teeth can lead to early childhood tooth decay. If you think your child has a dental problem, contact a dental office immediately.

Preparing your child for a first dental visit:

- Be relaxed. Your child will sense any anxiety on your part.
- Keep the topic of the first dental visit positive and avoid negative talk. Do not say words that can create fear, such as hurt or needle.
- Do not pass on your own fears, anxieties or any of your past experiences to your child. Set a good example and have a positive attitude.
- Schedule the appointment in the morning when your child is fed and is more rested.
- Let your child bring a favourite toy along.
- Do not let a dental emergency be your child's first visit to the dentist.

Choosing the right dentist for your child:

- Choose a dental office that recommends your child's first visit be by the time the first tooth appears or by his or her first birthday.
- Choose a dental office that is both child and parent friendly.

- Ask friends, family and neighbours which dental office they recommend.
- Choose a dental office where you feel comfortable asking questions.
- You can also choose a pediatric dentist who specializes in the care of young children. You can ask your family dentist for recommendations.

What to expect at the first dental visit:

- A look in your child's mouth.
- A demonstration on how to clean your child's teeth.
- A demonstration on how to lift the lip to look for decay along the gum lines.
- Discussing your child's teething and oral habits.
- Discussing risk factors for cavities, including oral hygiene, sugar intake, fluoride use and family history of cavities to prevent early childhood tooth decay.
- Discussing your questions and concerns.
- A discussion regarding any treatment recommended.

Parents play a vital role in the dental care of their children. A child's first visit to the dentist will help you give him or her a great start for a lifetime of good dental health.

For more information on dental health, please speak with your dental health professional, visit the City of Ottawa website at ottawa.ca/health or call Ottawa Public Health Info at 613-580-6744 or TTY 613-580-9656.

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