

Regular Dental Visits

Q: How often should a child see the dentist?

A: The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends a dental check-up at least twice a year for most children. Some children need more frequent dental visits because of increased risk of tooth decay, unusual growth patterns or poor oral hygiene. Your pediatric dentist will let you know the best appointment schedule for your child.

Q: Why visit the dentist twice a year when my child has never had a cavity?

A: Regular dental visits help your child stay cavity-free. Teeth cleanings remove debris that build up on the teeth, irritate the gums and cause decay. Fluoride treatments renew the fluoride content in the enamel, strengthening teeth and preventing cavities. Hygiene instructions improve your child's brushing and flossing, leading to cleaner teeth and healthier gums.

Tooth decay isn't the only reason for a dental visit. Your pediatric dentist provides an ongoing assessment of changes in your child's oral health. For example, your child may need additional fluoride, dietary changes, or sealants for ideal dental health. The pediatric dentist may identify orthodontic problems and suggest treatment to guide the teeth as they emerge in the mouth.

Q: What happens in a dental check-up?

A: The pediatric dentist will review your child's medical and dental history. He or she will gently examine your child's teeth, oral tissues, and jaws. The teeth will be cleaned and polished, followed by the application of a fluoride solution.

Your pediatric dentist won't talk just to you about dental health, he or she will talk to your child with easily understandable words, pictures, and ideas. Your child will be motivated to take responsibility for healthy smile.

Q: Will X-rays be taken at every appointment?

A: No. Pediatric dentists, acting in accord with guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, recommend X-rays only when necessary to protect your child's dental health. For example, X-rays may be needed to diagnose tooth decay or abnormalities. Or, they may be required for orthodontic treatment. Your pediatric dentist will discuss the need for X-rays with you before any are taken.

Q: How can I help my child enjoy good dental health?

A: The following steps will help your child be part of the cavity-free generation:

- Beware of frequent snacking
- Brush effectively twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste
- Floss once a day
- Have sealants applied when appropriate
- Seek regular dental check-ups
- Assure proper fluoride through drinking water, fluoride products or fluoride supplements