

Your Child's First Dental Visit

Your baby is hitting new milestones every day, and his or her first dental visit is another one to include in the baby book!

Your child's first dental visit should take place after that [first tooth appears](#), but no later than the first birthday. Why so early? As soon as your [baby has teeth](#), he or she can get cavities. Being proactive about your child's dental health today can help keep his or her smile healthy for life. This first visit will be brief but important introduction and screening. The first true dental cleaning appointment should be scheduled around 3 years old.

How to Prepare

Start early! To get your child ready for the visit, talk to him or her about what's going to happen and be positive. Have your child practice opening his or her mouth to get them ready for when the dentist counts and checks their teeth. Reading books or watching videos about first dental visits may help your child be less fearful and more confident.

Moms and dads can prepare, too. When making the appointment, it can't hurt to ask for any necessary patient forms ahead of time. It may be quicker and easier for you to fill them out at home instead of at the office on the day of your visit.

Make a list of questions, as well. If your child is [teething](#), sucking his or her [thumb](#) or using a [pacifier](#) too much, your dentist can offer some advice.

What to Expect During the Visit

The dentist will examine your child to make sure their jaw and teeth are developing in the way they should. During the visit, you will be seated in the dental chair with your child on your lap if your child isn't able to — or doesn't want to — sit in the chair alone. The dentist will check for mouth injuries, cavities or other issues. Once that part of the exam is over, the dentist will clean your child's teeth and give you tips for daily care.

If your child cries a little or wiggles during the exam, don't worry. It's normal, and your dental team understands this is a new experience for your child!

Tips for a Great Visit

- Don't schedule an appointment during naptime. Instead, pick a time your child is usually well-rested and cooperative.
- Make sure your child has had a light meal and brushes their teeth before their appointment so they won't be hungry during their visit.
- Save snacks for after the visit so they aren't on your child's teeth during the exam.
- Think of the appointment as a happy and fun experience. If your child becomes upset during the visit, work with your dentist to calm your child. You're on the same team!