

YOUR CHILD'S FIRST DENTAL VISIT

In this article I would like to present some ideas that can enhance your child's first experience at a dental office. It is very important that your child's first visits are pleasant. This way, they do not become the adult patients I treat who initially say, "nothing personal doc, but I don't like dentists". Unfortunately, many of us have had some uncomfortable dental visits in the past. The good news is that these patients leave by saying, "that wasn't what I expected", or "that didn't hurt at all". With a pleasant initial visit, your child can have a positive experience from the very start.

If your dentist is willing, you can schedule a no treatment, introductory visit. This is an informal visit where the child can see the office, meet and talk with the staff as well as the doctor. The friendly members of the dental team will greet your child and answer any questions that he or she may have.

Prior to scheduling your child's first visit to the office, let the dentist and the staff know if you have any concerns. At this time you should discuss any special needs that your child may have. Also, let the staff know if your child has any negative feelings about their upcoming visit. It is my recommendation that you not try to ease the child's fears by saying statements like, "don't worry, the dentist is nice and it won't hurt". Such statements may unintentionally introduce fear into the child about their upcoming appointment.

When it is time to schedule an appointment (unless there is a dental emergency), your child's first visit should be scheduled for an examination and a cleaning. Simple x-rays may also be taken at this time, if necessary. It is important to begin talking to your child about their upcoming appointment rather than surprising them the day of the appointment. Children need to be prepared in a positive way. During the appointment, the dentist and hygienist can take the time to show your child the different instruments, how they are used and the sounds they make. By preparing your child in this manner they will not be afraid of the unknown.

Your child's first dental experience is very important. It is not only important psychologically, but will also introduce them to how they will view the care of their teeth. A gradual introduction to the office and their treatment is the first step. A caring, friendly office that will take time with your child is crucial. The dentist and his team can mold and shape their visits into a wonderful, positive experience that will last a lifetime.