



# GREAT SMILES

PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY & ORTHODONTICS

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What should I use to clean my baby's teeth?**

A toothbrush will remove plaque bacteria that can lead to decay. Any soft-bristled toothbrush with a small head, preferably one designed specifically for infants, should be used twice a day and especially at bedtime.

### **When should I take my child to the dentist for the first check-up?**

In order to prevent dental problems, your child should see a pediatric dentist when the first tooth appears, or no later than his/her first birthday.

### **What is the difference between a pediatric dentist and a family dentist?**

Pediatric dentists are the pediatricians of dentistry. A pediatric dentist has two to three years specialty training following dental school and limits his/her practice to treating children only. Pediatric dentists are primary and specialty oral care providers for infants and children through adolescence, including those with special health needs.

### **Are baby teeth really that important to my child?**

Primary, or "baby," teeth are important for many reasons. Not only do they help children speak clearly and chew naturally, they also aid in forming a path that permanent teeth can follow when they are ready to erupt.

### **What should I do if my child has a toothache?**

First, rinse the irritated area with warm salt water and place a cold compress on the face if it is swollen. Give the child acetaminophen for any pain, rather than placing aspirin on the teeth or gums. Finally, see a dentist as soon as possible.

### **Are thumb sucking and pacifier habits harmful for a child's teeth?**

Thumb and pacifier sucking habits will generally only become a problem if they go on for a very long period of time. Most children stop these habits on their own, but if they are still sucking their thumbs or fingers when the permanent teeth arrive, your pediatric dentist may recommend a habit appliance to be placed in child's mouth.

### **How can I prevent decay caused by nursing?**

Avoid nursing children to sleep or putting anything other than water in their bed-time bottle. Also, learn the proper way to brush and floss your child's teeth. Take your child to a pediatric dentist regularly to have his/her teeth and gums checked. The first dental visit should be scheduled by your child's first birthday. A check-up every six months is recommended in order to prevent cavities and other dental problems. However, your pediatric dentist can tell you when and how often your child should visit based on their personal oral health.

### **Toothpaste: When should we begin using it and how much should we use?**

Fluoridated toothpaste should be introduced when a child is 6 months of age. Prior to that, parents should clean the child's teeth with water and a soft-bristled toothbrush. When toothpaste is used up to age 6, parents should supervise brushing and make sure the child uses no more than a pea-sized amount on the brush. Children should spit out and not swallow excess toothpaste after brushing.

### **How do dental sealants work?**

Sealants work by filling in the pits and grooves surfaces of back teeth. This shuts out food particles that could get caught in the teeth, causing cavities. The application is fast and comfortable and can effectively protect teeth for many years.

### **What can I do to protect my child's teeth during sporting events?**

Soft plastic mouth guards should be used to protect a child's teeth, lips, cheeks and gums from sport related injuries. A custom-fitted mouth guard developed by a pediatric dentist will protect your child from injuries to the teeth, face and even provide protection from severe injuries to the head.

### **What should I do if my child falls and knocks out a permanent tooth?**

The most important thing to do is to remain calm. Then find the tooth. Hold it by the crown rather than the root and try to reinsert it in the socket. If that is not possible, put the tooth in a glass of milk and take your child and the glass immediately to the pediatric dentist.

### **How safe are dental X-rays?**

There is very little risk in dental X-rays. Pediatric dentists are especially careful to limit the amount of radiation to which children are exposed. Lead aprons and high-speed film are used to ensure safety and minimize the amount of radiation.