

# Your Child's First Dental Visit

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure". How well this proverb applies to children's oral health!

The Australian Dental Association recommends that your child's first oral health visit take place at 12 months of age, or shortly after the eruption of the first baby teeth

Your dentist will evaluate your child's oral and dental health and diagnose any problems, which may exist. Do not wait until a problem occurs. Preventive dental visits from an early age lay the foundation for a lifetime of good oral and dental health

During your child's visit, the dentist will:

1. Look at the child's face and jaws for signs of mal-alignment
2. Try to look at any teeth that are through to make sure they are healthy
3. Instruct the parent or guardian on fluoride, diet, brushing and general oral health tips

Identifying signs of early childhood decay is vital. It starts as white patches on the teeth that don't seem to be able to be cleaned off. They are often close to the gum and they eventually break down further to form holes

Some first visit **DO'S**:

- Take time to play "dentist" with your child at home. Pretend that you're counting teeth, then switch roles and let your child play "dentist"
- Read your child a story about going to the dentist
- Make the dental appointment for a time when your child is well-rested
- Inform your dentist about any medical or psychological problems that your child may have
- Openly discuss your questions and concerns

Some first visit **DONT'S**:

- Don't convey anxiety about the dental visit to your child. For example, don't say "It's OK, the dentist won't HURT you" or "The dentist won't need to use the INJECTION". These are usually the parent's fears, not the child's
- Don't worry if your child cries a little during the visit. A very young child may react that way but will be won over eventually
- Don't use negative words like: hurt, shot, needle, or drill around your child