

# POWER OF KNOWING

*An educational resource for patients and families.*

## HELPING YOUR CHILD COPE WITH DENTAL CARE

### The unknown is often scarier than the known

Sometimes, children and their parents have worries about visiting the dentist. Having information and preparing for the visit can help reduce stress.

### Helping your child prepare for a dental visit:

#### *Infants/Toddlers:*

- Read books or watch a short video about going to the dentist.
- Play dentist with a lamp or book light, leaning back position. Peek-a-Boo with mask. Use gloves and take turns to count each other's teeth.
- Sing songs to encourage opening mouth and brushing.
- Make a paper bag puppet with mouth and teeth. Use with songs and play.
- Use these games frequently before a future visit.
- Choose a comfort item, character to practice on first, or favorite toy to bring.

#### *School Age/Teens:*

- Be honest, acknowledge fears, and focus on ways to make the visit easier.
- Practice Progressive Muscle Relaxation and breathing (through the nose) activities at home. PMR involves tightening and relaxing different muscles.
- Use soft language. "Medicines that take the pain away" instead of "shot" or "injection", "small brush to clean the black spot" instead of "drill".
- Help children understand the sound, taste, smell, and feeling of something by relating it to something familiar and not scary.

### Supporting your child during visits:

- **Choose a positive focus:** Parent reading a book, using music or video with a headset, thinking about a favorite place, and using a stress ball.
- **Use a comfort position:** Hold hands, lay with child (their back on your chest).
- **Give praise:** "Great job holding still, opening your mouth, taking deep breaths".
- **Use positive statements:** "We can get through hard things", "I am here to help you with your job to keep your mouth open and holding still".
- **Give a choice:** Small choices can give children a sense of control.
- **Avoid threats:** Focus on "helpful behaviors" and small rewards (a fun activity).
- **Remain Calm:** Children sense the anxiety of adults around them. Talk in a calm and "matter of fact" voice.



### Suggested Resources

#### Brushing Songs

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wCio\\_xVlgQ0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wCio_xVlgQ0)

<https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/Kids-Brushing-Playlist>

#### Helpful Tips

Make brushing FUN!  
<https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/babies-and-kids/fun-ways-to-encourage-kids-to-brush>

[Child Life Mommy Blog: 7 tips to help your child at the dentist](#)

American Dental Association: [Healthy Smiles From the Start](#)



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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### When should my child visit the dentist?

- Visit the dentist when the first baby tooth comes in and before the 1<sup>st</sup> birthday.
- Routine visits should be scheduled even when there is no pain or concern. Visits should occur 1-2 times a year to prevent caries and other problems but your dentist may recommend more frequent visits depending on the need.

### When should I start brushing my child's teeth and how much fluoride toothpaste should I use?

- **Infants:** Clean gums with a soft, wet cloth. As teeth come in, use a soft toothbrush with a grain of rice size amount of fluoride paste (0-3 years).
- **Toddlers / Preschoolers:** They may want to brush on their own but parents must share this job. Use a pea size amount of fluoride paste (3-6 years) and spit after brushing all teeth.
- **School Age and Teens:** Continue to monitor for proper brushing and flossing.
- Brush 2 times a day (in morning and just before bed) for 2 minutes. Avoid food and drinks after night time brushing.

### When should we begin flossing?

- Establish a flossing habit early. When two teeth touch you should begin this habit and continue once a day. Children 10 and under may still need help.
- Floss before or after (there is no "correct" order). Give children the choice.

### What kind of toothbrush is best?

- A soft brush is recommended to prevent damage to gums and enamel.
- Powered or manual toothbrushes equally do the job. Be cautious using a powered toothbrush for young children as these can be scary.

### Is it ok to give a bottle at night time?

- Avoid putting infants and toddlers to sleep with a bottle. There is a risk of tooth decay. Make sure to clean gums and teeth after giving a bottle.

*Adapted from the American Dental Association, Mouth Healthy, [www.mouthhealthy.org](http://www.mouthhealthy.org).*

### Child Life Services

A child life specialist is available to provide support and help your child explore the dental equipment. Please email: [khchildlife@fakeeh.care](mailto:khchildlife@fakeeh.care) to schedule a visit.



### Suggested Resources

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### Website

<https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en>

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