

# The Pediatric Dentist

Pediatric dentistry is the specialty of dentistry that focuses on the oral health and unique needs of young people. After completing a four-year dental school curriculum, two to three additional years of rigorous training is required to become a pediatric dentist. This specialized program of study and hands-on experience prepares pediatric dentists to meet the unique needs of your infants, children and adolescents, including persons with special health care needs.

We are concerned about your child's total health care. Good oral health is an important part of total health. Establishing us as your child's, "Dental Home" provides us the opportunity to implement preventive dental health habits that keep a child free from dental/oral disease. We focus on prevention, early detection and treatment of dental diseases, and keep current on the latest advances in dentistry for children. Pleasant visits to the dental office promote the establishment of trust and confidence in your child that will last a lifetime. Our goal, along with our staff, is to help all children feel good about visiting the dentist and teach them how to care for their teeth. From our special office designs, to our communication style, our main concern is what is best for your child.

## Preventing Tooth Decay

Four things are necessary for cavities to form: 1) a tooth; 2) bacteria; 3) sugars or other carbohydrates; and 4) time. We can share with you how to make teeth strong, keep bacteria from organizing into harmful colonies, develop healthy eating habits, and understand the role that time plays. Remember, dental decay is an infection of the tooth. Visiting us early can help avoid unnecessary cavities and dental treatment. The pediatric dental community is continually doing research to develop new techniques for preventing dental decay and other forms of oral disease. Studies show that children with poor oral health have decreased school performance, poor social relationships and less success later in life. Children experiencing pain from decayed teeth are distracted and unable to concentrate on schoolwork.

## Importance of Primary Teeth (Baby Teeth)

It is very important that primary teeth are kept in place until they are lost naturally. These teeth serve a number of critical functions. Primary teeth:

- Maintain good nutrition by permitting your child to chew properly.
- Are involved in speech development.
- Help the permanent teeth by saving space for them. A healthy smile can help children feel good about the way they look to others.

## Infants and Children

Getting an early start in regular dental care is an important step on the road to teaching your child healthy lifetime habits. We want to share with you the latest available methods for keeping your child healthy and safe.

The first dental visit should occur shortly after the first tooth erupts and no later than the child's first birthday. Beginning tooth and mouth examinations early may lead to detection of early stages of tooth decay that can be easily treated. At the first visit we will present:

- A program of preventive home care including brushing, flossing, diet and the importance of fluorides.
- A caries risk assessment.
- Information about Early Childhood Caries, which may be due to inappropriate nursing habits or inappropriate use of sippy cups.
- The latest facts about finger, thumb and pacifier habits.
- What you need to know about preventing injuries to the mouth and teeth.
- Information on growth and development.

## The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD)

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD), with over 5,800 dedicated professionals, was founded in 1947 by men and women who are dedicated to improving the oral health of children. We emphasize a three-part approach to caring for the children of this country and the world: 1) **Practice** - treating children in the dental office, hospital, school-based clinics and mobile programs; 2) **Teaching** - educating parents, the public and other health professionals; training future pediatric dentists to deliver the best possible care for children; and 3) **Research** - working in laboratories, universities, and industry to develop even better methods of preventing oral diseases and treating problems of the teeth and gums. Together, the three components of the AAPD work for the benefit of your child.