



Paedodontic Society of South Africa

Special Group of SADA

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Let me ask you Doc?

The Dental Check-up

by Dr Janet Lynn Gritzman BA BDS(Wits) (President of the Paedodontic Society of S.A.)



At what age should a child have his/her first dental check-up?

Early visits to the dentist have been strongly recommended to help reduce the number of infants and children who suffer from preventable tooth decay.

Ideally we like to see children have their first dental check-up by their first birthday.

- Examining the child gives the dentist an opportunity to examine the mouth and confirm normal oral development.
- The dentist can check on the cleanliness of the mouth and teeth and for any signs of tooth decay. It gives the dentist an opportunity to give advice on prevention,
- It provides the parents with a chance to discuss oral hygiene practices, teething and mouth habits.
- Allows the child to become familiar with the dental environment. A non threatening, fun-filled first encounter with the dentist will encourage a positive attitude to dentists and future dental treatment.

How often should a child visit the dentist?

The Paedodontic society of S.A. recommends a 6 monthly dental check-up for most children. Some children will need more frequent dental visits because of increased risk of tooth decay, unusual growth patterns or poor oral hygiene.

Why should a child go to the dentist if he/she does not have toothache?

- Cleaning and polishing the teeth remove debris that build up on teeth, irritate gums and cause decay.
- Fluoride treatments strengthen teeth and prevent cavities.
- Oral hygiene instruction improve children's brushing and flossing, leading to cleaner healthier teeth and gums.
- Regular dental check-ups, enable the dentist to locate caries early, and treat it before it causes pain and spreads to other teeth.
- Tooth decay isn't the only reason for a dental examination. The dentist will also assess changes in the child's oral health and identify orthodontic problems.
- If the dentist is adept in dealing with children, he/she can make the dental appointment fun and exciting. Regular dental check-ups will enable the child to become familiar with the dental surgery and eliminate the fear of dental appointments and dental

treatment.

What happens at a dental check-up?

1. The dentist will take the child's medical and dental history.
2. He/she will do an examination of the child's teeth, oral tissues and jaws.
3. The teeth will be cleaned and polished.
4. An application of fluoride solution administered.
5. The dental equipment will be introduced to the child in an interesting and non threatening manner so that the child will become familiar with the dental environment and comfortable with dental treatment.
6. The dentist will also be able to talk to the child about the importance of caring for ones teeth in words, pictures and ideas in a way that the child can understand, so that he/she will be motivated to take responsibility for a healthy smile.

What steps can I take to ensure my child has good dental health?

- Eat healthily - avoid frequent snacking
- Brush properly twice a day
- Floss once a day
- Visit dentist regularly - 6 monthly
- Place fissure sealants on all permanent molars
- Ensure you child is getting the correct amount of fluoride