

How can I prepare for my child's first dental visit?

There are several things parents can do to make the first visit enjoyable. Some helpful tips are listed below:

Take another adult along for the visit – Sometimes infants become fussy when having their mouths examined. Having another adult along to soothe the infant allows the parent to ask questions and to attend to any advice the dentist may have.

Leave other children at home – Other children can distract the parent and cause the infant to fuss. Leaving other children at home (when possible) makes the first visit less stressful for all concerned.

Avoid threatening language – Pediatric dentists and staff are trained to avoid the use of threatening language like “drills,” “needles,” “injections,” and “bleeding.” It is imperative for parents to use positive language when speaking about dental treatment with their child.

Provide positive explanations – It is important to explain the purposes of the dental visit in a positive way. Explaining that the dentist “helps keep teeth healthy” is far better than explaining that the dentist “is checking for tooth decay and might have to drill the tooth if decay is found.”

Explain what will happen – Anxiety can be vastly reduced if the child knows what to expect. Age-appropriate books about visiting the dentist can be very helpful in making the visit seem fun. Here is a list of parent and dentist-approved books:

- ***The Berenstain Bears Visit the Dentist*** – by Stan and Jan Berenstain.
- ***Show Me Your Smile: A Visit to the Dentist*** – Part of the “Dora the Explorer” Series.
- ***Going to the Dentist*** – by Anne Civardi.
- ***Elmo Visits the Dentist*** – Part of the “Sesame Street” Series.