



6 Tips to Get Your Family to the Dentist!



We all know how important good oral hygiene is for our families. Not only will regular trips to the dentist help keep cavities at bay, research has also shown that professional dental care can reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke. Unfortunately, sometimes our kids (and maybe even husbands!) could use a little convincing to get them into the local dentist's office. As all moms know, the responsibility for making it happen likely falls on your shoulders. Take a look at the six tips below for suggestions on how to get your family to the dentist!

1. Make Healthy Mouths a Part of the Routine

When your children know that something is a part of their everyday routine, they tend to learn to accept it as a part of life. Encourage brushing teeth first thing in the morning, before bed, and after meals. Regular flossing should take place also, although you will likely have to help with this task for several years.

Many children balk at the thought of brushing their teeth, so make it a game if need be. Set a timer or play their favorite song and have them dance as they brush. Make it a challenge to see who can brush their teeth the most consistently over a week's time, and award a prize for the winner. Brushing and flossing is an inevitable part of life, and the sooner your kids embrace it, the better.



2. Get Started Early

The [American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry](#) recommends that a child see their dentist at least six months after their first tooth erupts or by one-year-old, whichever is first. While this visit won't be your typical trip to the dentist, it will be a modified version where proper brushing and flossing practices are discussed, as well as a quick look at the teeth that your little one does have. These visits will allow your children to become comfortable with the idea of the dentist from a very young age, making it something they understand rather than something they fear.

Oral healthcare needs to be a part of everyday life for your little ones from the moment that first tooth pops through. If you're uncomfortable using a children's toothbrush (or they won't let you!), use a wet rag to wipe down teeth after feedings and before bed. Once they are a bit older, get them used to the routine of brushing teeth, using a pea-sized drop of toothpaste – there are many fluoride-free options out there that are child-safe. You should also begin flossing your child's teeth from the time they have two teeth that are touching.

3. Explain the Benefits



Most kids have a million questions about nearly everything that comes up in their daily lives. Everything is new and potentially exciting, so fill them in on the benefits of good oral care and exactly why they need to visit the dentist. You should also explain the risks of avoiding the dentist for long periods of time. The more they understand, the more likely they are to willingly go.

The main benefit of regularly visiting the dentist, aside from keeping teeth healthy and strong, is prevention. Consistent dentist visits help to avoid a number of oral health issues. From cavities to tooth decay to gum inflammation, having teeth checked on a normal basis will help to keep these issues away. By doing your best to provide the information they need, without going overboard and veering into scary territory of course, your children should be ready and willing to make a trip to the dentist's office when that time of year rolls around.

4. Make It a Family Affair



If you have more than one child, try to schedule your kid's appointments all in the same day. Watching older siblings have their teeth cleaned and checked out can make it seem less scary for little ones who may have a fear of the dentist. Another plus – you can knock out the yearly appointment for all of the kids in one day! What multi-tasking mom doesn't love that?

5. Discuss Any Fears

Many children have a fear of the dentist. Sitting in a strange room with bright lights and weird noises while a masked person sticks metal objects in their mouth doesn't seem like the most pleasant experience for most kids. However, as we adults know, a trip to the dentist is essential when it comes to great oral hygiene, and is also rarely as painful as we think it will be. Allowing your kids a chance to explain what their fears are and why they don't want to go, and then having an open conversation, will help them to see that going to the dentist isn't as scary as they might think.

Answer questions openly and honestly. Don't promise that it won't hurt, they won't have to have a cavity filled, or anything else that you can't guarantee – but do promise that you will be right there and that the dentist would never try to hurt them. If your children are young enough that they don't have specific questions but are still afraid, explain that the dentist will just be checking their smile and counting their teeth to make sure they are strong and healthy.

6. Keep Things Positive!



Be mindful anytime you talk about the dentist. Try to refrain from talking about pain or shots, or describing the exam in an unpleasant way. Explain that a visit to the dentist is necessary every once in awhile to keep teeth clean, healthy, and as strong as they can be. Portray the visit as something new and different, not something to be dreaded or a form of punishment.

Convincing your family that a trip to the dentist is necessary may not be the easiest task, but by following the tips above it can certainly be done. Explaining things in detail, having an open conversation, and keeping a positive attitude will go a long way in encouraging your family members to get on board. Good oral hygiene is one of the most important things you can promote as a parent, and starting from a very young age is the easiest way to get it done. Start the conversation today to get your family on the road to healthy teeth!

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