



How to Prepare Children for Their First Treatment

If your child has a cavity, they're not alone. But what do you do as a parent to get them ready for the appointment? Here are a few simple tips to help you and your child prepare for their filling.

Prior to your Visit

Nitrous Oxide, also known as "laughing gas" or "ice cream air", is one of the *safest* and *most effective* mild sedation techniques. It is often used to reduce anxiety and discomfort during the procedure. Your child will be awake throughout the procedure and breathes oxygen through the nasal hood at the end of the appointment to flush their system.

Your child should avoid eating heavy meals, dairy, and/or caffeine for at least 2 hours before their appointment.

Don't Panic

When the dentist tells you that your child needs a cavity filling, stay calm. Your child hears everything you say, even if they act like they don't. If they see you looking nervous or panicked, they'll pick up on those emotions, and you may unwittingly be transmitting anxiety and negative messages to your children about dental treatment.

Emphasize the Positive

Explain how fortunate your child is to have a good dentist who can fix their tooth. This is not the time to blame the child for poor brushing or eating habits. Share your own positive dental experiences. Kids should know that cavities are very common and not hard for a dentist to fix.

Use Non-Scary Words

For example: The dentist is going to "clean the sugar bugs out of your tooth" and "polish a sore spot." Or they are going to use "sleepy juice for your tooth." If your child wants to know how your dentist will give their tooth sleepy juice, tell them with a "magic wand". Avoid such language as "needle," "shot" or "it's not going to hurt." You do not want your child to focus on negatives. If you say "it's not going to hurt," your child hears "it's going to hurt."

Give Your Child Some Control

If they want to wear certain clothes or bring a comfort item such as a stuffed animal, let them.

Have Fun!

Plan to do something fun afterward. Go to the park or another favorite spot after the appointment. Or take them out for a special food treat once the "sleepy juice" in his mouth wears off.

Most important, ensure your child's first procedure is a positive experience!

Children who receive good dental care, and who aren't afraid of treatment, are more likely to take proper care of their teeth and gums as they grow. Encourage brushing twice a day, flossing daily and visiting the dentist for a check-up every six months. That practice will benefit their health throughout their lives.



Dental Procedures at Big Smiles Pediatric Dentistry

Your child has been scheduled for a treatment – what can you expect from the procedures? Here are the most common dental treatments offered at Big Smiles to help improve your child’s oralhealth.

Cavities

The combination of four factors – food, saliva, acid, and bacteria – creates plaque formed on teeth. The plaque eats away at the teeth until a hole is created, called a cavity. Children require parental supervision until they are around 6-8 years old. Parents should supervise and guide their children in developing the proper brushing and flossing technique, twice a day.

Common causes of kids’ cavities include:

- Inadequate oral hygiene
- Consuming too many sugars and starches
- Public water supply without fluoride
- High levels of the bacteria that cause cavities
- Less saliva flow than normal

Silver Diamond Fluoride (SDF)

Silver diamond fluoride (SDF) is a medication that is applied to an area of active decay to kill the bacteria causing the cavity. This prevents the formation of a plaque layer on the treated surface and strengthens the tooth. This procedure is recommended for younger children who cannot yet tolerate full dental treatment. SDF stains the cavity black.

Resin Composite Fillings

When a tooth is fractured or damaged due to trauma or decay from cavities, dental fillings can restore the tooth’s structure. Topical jelly and local anesthetic is used to numb the area prior to starting the procedure. Dentists may also offer nitrous oxide (also known as laughing gas) to help children relax for the procedure. The dentist will remove the decay before filling the hole with composite, a tooth-colored material.

We offer the Solea laser on a case by case basis as an alternative option for resin composite fillings that removes the decay without the use of local anesthesia and minimizes the use of drills

Crown

If a cavity causes major decay, there may not be enough tooth structure to support a filling. Crowns completely cover a tooth to protect it from further damage or decay by keeping the tooth and root intact and reduces the risk of pain and infection. Dental crowns are the recommended way to keep a baby tooth in place or save a permanent tooth.

Stainless Steel Crowns

Stainless Steel Crowns (SSCs) are silver caps most commonly used for back teeth. They are long-lasting and protect the tooth and root of a baby tooth until tooth loss occurs naturally. The placement of an SSC usually occurs in one

appointment. The dentist will shape the child's tooth to the necessary form and make adjustments so that it fits well over the tooth. The dental crown is cemented into place where it remains until the permanent tooth is ready to come in.

We also offer zirconia crowns (tooth-colored crowns), but they are not as long-lasting as SSCs. Due to this nature, it is often not covered by insurance.

Pulpotomy

Your child's baby teeth are important in guiding permanent teeth into position, so you want to treat and keep baby teeth until they are lost naturally.

When a deep cavity in a baby tooth reaches the nerve, we may recommend a dental pulpotomy procedure. A pulpotomy removes part of the tooth's pulp to prevent or treat the formation of an abscess. A stainless steel crown is strongly recommended after a pulpotomy and usually done in the same appointment to preserve the tooth's integrity.

Extractions

A pediatric tooth extraction is a routine procedure that is performed in the office with mild anesthesia. After the extraction, please follow the instructions for caring for the mouth. Depending on which tooth was removed, your child may have a little swelling or discomfort.

If antibiotics are prescribed, please make sure to give your child the full course of treatment to prevent infections. For most tooth extractions, your child should be back to normal after a few days.

Space Maintainers

Space maintainers are necessary when a primary tooth is lost prematurely due to decay or injury because the gap left by a missing tooth needs to be maintained for the permanent tooth to erupt in the correct position. An impression of the tooth area will be taken at the first appointment and sent to a lab to fabricate the space maintainer. The space maintainer appliance will be placed at the second appointment and cemented in. Please avoid sticky foods such as caramels, taffy, and chewing gum as they can pull the space maintainer off.

Space maintainers DO NOT guarantee prevention of orthodontic treatment in the future.

