

How to make a trip to the dentist fun for kids

Tips from more than 300 dentists

Proper dental health starts early and that includes trips to the dentist. While children may feel awkward or nervous their first time in the dental chair, visiting the dentist should not be a scary thing.

The Chicago Dental Society surveyed more than 300 dentists to find the best tips for parents to make visiting the dentist positive for kids.

Start dental visits early. Many dentists recommend starting visits from as early as six months or about the same time your child's first tooth appears. Visiting the dentist at a young age will help the child to develop positive associations with the experience.

Educate on the importance of dental health. Teach your kids the basics of healthy teeth. Set an example by maintaining your own oral care and brush with your children in the morning and at night.

Don't make it such a "big deal." Many dentists surveyed agree that parents set the stage for the dental visit and can be the culprit for any fears their child experiences. Be wary of making your children think the dentist is scary before they even go. Let them form their own opinions.

Entertain while you wait. Play with toys, watch cartoons, or fill out coloring books in the waiting room with your children. This will help distract them from feeling scared and will also help calm you down, too.

Be positive. Keep a friendly smile at all times and use positive and encouraging words when discussing the dental visit.

Give a small treat. After the visit, feel free to give your child a fun 'prize' like a cool toothbrush or stickers to cheer on their experience. Many pediatric dentists may also offer a small treat for children to look forward to after the cleaning is complete.

Relax! Your child can pick up on your anxieties. Remember this is an important part of your child's health. ■

Dental Dateline is provided by your Chicago Dental Society member dentists. For more oral health information, visit us online at www.cds.org.

