



Dental Health for Preschoolers

Did you know that the number-one dental problem among preschoolers is tooth decay?

Many parents assume that cavities in baby teeth do not matter, because they will be lost anyway. However, that is not true. Dental decay in baby teeth can negatively affect permanent teeth and lead to future dental problems.

The best way to protect your child's teeth is to teach good dental habits. With the proper coaching, your child will quickly adopt good oral hygiene as a part of his/her daily routine. However, while your child may be an enthusiastic participant, she/he may not have the control or concentration to brush their teeth independently. You will need to supervise and help so that the brush removes all the plaque—the soft, sticky, bacteria-containing deposits that accumulate on the teeth, causing tooth decay. Also, keep an eye out for areas of brown or white spots, which might be signs of early decay.

At age 3, you can start using a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste, which helps prevent cavities. If your child does not like the taste of the toothpaste, try another flavor. Also, try to teach your child not to swallow it, although at this age they are often still too young to learn to rinse and spit. Swallowing too much fluoride toothpaste can make white or brown spots on your child's adult teeth.

Both the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommend that all children see a pediatric dentist and establish a "dental home" by age one.

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Here are some resources that may help you find a dental home if you have limited resources:

KidSMILES Pediatric Dental Clinic

Provides comprehensive care to children in central Ohio at a very low cost. Run entirely by volunteer dentists, hygienists and dental professionals, the clinic focuses on providing services such as disease removal and prevention. They help children in families who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to afford monthly dental premiums.

770 Bethel Road, Columbus, Ohio 43214 (614) 458-1711 www.kidsmilesclinic.com

Nationwide Children's Hospital Dental Clinic

Provides routine and emergency dental care for babies, children and teens. As a Safety Net Dental Care program in Ohio, they offer sliding scale fees for those who cannot afford a private dentist. They accept many insurances as well, including Medicaid and have emergency walk-in hours. They have a baby dental clinic for children ages 0 to 3 as well.

555 South Eighteenth Street, Columbus, Ohio 43205 (614) 722-5650 www.nationwidechildrens.org

Nisonger Center at the Ohio State University (OSU)

In collaboration with Nationwide Children's Hospital, a complete range of dental services are offered for infants, children and adults with developmental disabilities. All major insurance programs (including Medicaid) and a sliding fee scale for self-pay patients are accepted. When necessary, fee arrangements can be made.

1581 Dodd Drive, Columbus, Ohio 43210 (614) 685-3197 <http://nisonger.osu.edu/dental>

Smiles 4 Life

Provides affordable dental services for children ages 12 months to 20 years old. Accepts most health insurances, including government insurances (Medicaid, Molina, Caresource) and has a sliding scale fee for uninsured patients.

4655 Morse Centre Road, Columbus, Ohio 43229 (614) 470-9840 www.smiles4life.com/columbus

Just Smiles

Accepts walk-ins for emergencies if they can, but call first. Also available for routine care. Does not accept Medicaid, but will work with the family on a payment plan if you do not have insurance. 2549 Hilliard Rome Rd (614) 777-8668