

# THE PEDIATRIC DENTIST



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY

Pediatric dentistry is the specialty of dentistry that focuses on the oral health of young people. After completing a four-year dental school curriculum, two to three additional years of rigorous training are required to become a pediatric dentist. This specialized program of study and hands-on experience prepares pediatric dentists to meet the needs of infants, children and adolescents, including persons with special health care needs.

We are concerned about your child's total health care. Good oral health is an important part of total health. Establishing us as your child's Dental Home provides us the opportunity to implement preventive dental health habits that keep a child free from dental/oral disease. We focus on prevention, early detection and treatment of dental diseases, and keep current on the latest advances in dentistry for children.

Pleasant visits to the dental office promote the establishment of trust and confidence in your child that will last a lifetime. Our goal, along with our staff, is to help all children feel good about visiting the dentist and teach them how to care for their teeth. From our special office designs to our communication style, our main concern is what is best for your child.

# THE PEDIATRIC

## Preventing Tooth Decay

Four things are necessary for cavities to form: 1) a tooth; 2) bacteria; 3) sugars or other carbohydrates; and 4) time. We can share with you how to make teeth strong, keep bacteria from organizing into harmful colonies, develop healthy eating habits, and understand the role that time plays. Remember dental decay is an infection of the tooth. Visiting us early can help avoid unnecessary cavities and dental treatment.

The pediatric dental community is continually doing research to develop new techniques for preventing dental decay and other forms of oral disease. Studies show that children with poor oral health have decreased school performance, poor social relationships and less success later in life. Children experiencing pain from decayed teeth are distracted and unable to concentrate on schoolwork.

## Importance of Primary Teeth (Baby Teeth)

It is very important that primary teeth are kept in place until they are lost naturally. These teeth serve a number of critical functions. Primary teeth:

- Maintain good nutrition by permitting your child to chew properly.
- Are involved in speech development.
- Help the permanent teeth by saving space for them. A healthy smile can help children feel good about the way they look to others.

## Infants and Children

Getting an early start in regular dental care is an important step on the road to teaching your child healthy lifetime habits. We want to share with you the latest available methods for keeping your child healthy and safe.

The first dental visit should occur shortly after the first tooth erupts and no later than the child's first birthday. Beginning tooth and mouth examinations early may lead to detection of early stages of tooth decay that can be easily treated. At the first visit we will present:

- A program of preventive home care including brushing, flossing, diet and the importance of fluorides.
- A caries risk assessment.
- Information about Early Childhood Caries, which may be due to inappropriate nursing habits or inappropriate use of sippy cups.
- The latest facts about finger, thumb and pacifier habits.
- What you need to know about preventing injuries to the mouth and teeth.
- Information on growth and development.

# DENTIST

## Adolescents

Adolescents have special needs. Appearance and self-image are very important to them. Decayed or poorly positioned teeth or jaws might make them more self-conscious. Teens also eat frequently, and unhealthy snack foods tend to become a major part of their regular diet. We provide a professional, sensitive and caring approach to restoring and guiding teeth, and teaching preventive dental health care through the teen's high school years. When necessary, we will provide information on sealants, oral piercing, wisdom teeth, missing teeth and tobacco use.

## Young People with Special Needs

An integral part of our education is concerned with the medical and dental health of the special patient. People with significant medical, physical, or mental disabilities often present challenges to dentists. Our training allows us to address their special needs and provide the best care possible.

## Team Approach to Total Health

Good oral health is an important part of total health. When helping children, we often work with pediatricians, other physicians and dental specialists. All young people are served best through this team approach. We, the pediatric dentists, are an important part of your child's health team.

## **The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD)**

Founded in 1947, the AAPD is a not-for-profit membership association representing the specialty of pediatric dentistry. The AAPD's 7,800 members are primary oral health care providers who offer comprehensive specialty treatment for millions of infants, children, adolescents, and individuals with special health care needs. The AAPD also represents general dentists who treat a significant number of children in their practices. As advocates for children's oral health, the AAPD develops and promotes evidence-based policies and guidelines, fosters research, contributes to scholarly work concerning pediatric oral health, and educates health care providers, policymakers, and the public on ways to improve children's oral health. For further information, please visit the AAPD Web site at [www.aapd.org](http://www.aapd.org).

### **American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry**

211 East Chicago Avenue, Suite 1700  
Chicago, Illinois 60611  
(312) 337-2169  
[aapdinfo@aapd.org](mailto:aapdinfo@aapd.org)  
[www.aapd.org](http://www.aapd.org)



©2011 American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry  
All rights reserved.