

# Children's Health

## Open Wide: Your Child's First Trip To The Dentist

(NAPSA)—Teething typically begins between the fourth and seventh month. When your child has a few teeth, brush them with a soft toothbrush or rub them with gauze at the end of each day. As soon as two teeth are touching, begin to floss gently. And about six months after the first tooth emerges, it's time for your baby's first trip to the dentist.

"Choose a dentist who is comfortable with children," says Sharon Bergen, senior vice president of education and training for Knowledge Learning Corporation, the nation's leading provider of early childhood care and education. "A pediatric dentist may be a wise choice." The office of a pediatric dentist is designed to make children feel secure and safe. The décor is usually colorful, and the staff is focused on caring for children and putting them at ease.

"Try to make the child's visit to the dentist fun," says Bergen. "You might tell your child something as simple as 'You are going to visit a doctor who will count your teeth.'"

The first visit to a dentist will likely be brief, giving your child an opportunity to become familiar with the office. The dentist will want you to accompany your child to the examination room, where you may be asked to hold her.



Photo Credit: Knowledge Learning Corp.

Dierdre Froehlich, a Portland, Oregon dentist, says: "I like to sit knee-to-knee with the parent, with the child on her back on the parent's lap, with her head toward me. This lets her look at Mom or Dad." As your child becomes comfortable, the dentist will examine teeth, gums and bite, and gently clean her teeth.

The dentist will discuss with you such topics as good oral hygiene practices for your child, fluoride needs, habits such as thumbsucking, developmental milestones, proper nutrition, and when to schedule your child's next exam.

"Your child's first visit to the dentist is an important first step toward a lifetime of good dental habits," says Bergen.