

Letter to Parents about the First Dental Examination

Dear Parents,

In recent years there has been an alarming increase in cavities in young children, many less than two years old. This phenomenon is being seen across the country.

Most parents have been told or led to believe that the first visit to the dentist should occur around three or four years of age, or by the time a child starts school. Unfortunately, for many children, this delay of the first dental examination is a problem because disease has already affected them with pain and, occasionally, the loss of developing permanent teeth which lie beneath the decayed baby teeth.

In 1986 the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry put forth the guideline, **“a first dental examination no later than 12 months of age.”** Pediatric dentists were and are acutely aware of problems in the mouths of toddlers, and this guideline resulted from their determination to **prevent** dental disease in young children **rather than treat** its ravages.

Two important things are achieved when children have a first dental examination no later than their first birthday: (1) Problems that are beginning can be detected and treated, preventing further damage to either the baby teeth or the developing permanent teeth that lie in the gums beneath the baby teeth. (2) Parents can be provided information about what causes cavities including nursing bottle caries, learn about proper cleaning and hygiene for their infant’s mouth, and be informed about which foods, including snacks, do not promote tooth decay.

Very young children can begin to learn significant oral health and dietary habits that help prevent dental disease and assure they have a lifetime of oral health with a beautiful smile. Please call or email our office with questions or to schedule your child’s first dental examination.

Sincerely,

Dr. Marilyn Jones and Staff