Dental checks for young children

Summary

- Don’t wait until your child has a dental problem to take them for a dental check.
- Make sure your child has had a dental check by the time they turn two.
- Talk with your dentist or oral health professional about how often your child needs a check-up.

Make sure your child has had a dental check by the time they turn two.

Dental checks are important because:

- the early signs of tooth decay and other problems can easily be missed by families
- small problems can be treated before they become larger problems
- they give you a chance to ask questions or talk about any concerns you may have
- your dentist can help prevent decay with treatments such as fluoride application and dental sealants
- children get to know the dental staff and become familiar with the process of visiting the dentist.

Oral health professionals who may perform dental checks for children include:

- dentists
- oral health therapists
- dental therapists
- dental hygienists.

Other professionals who might perform dental checks for very young children include:

- maternal and child health nurses
- GPs
- practice nurses (at your GP clinic).

These professionals will refer your child to an oral health professional if necessary.

Tips for positive dental visits

To try to make your child’s visit to the dentist a positive one:

- Take your child with you when you have a check-up so that they can see what happens.
- Make sure you only say positive things about your dental experiences in front of children. Children learn about the dentist by listening to others.
- Talk about dental visits being part of your regular routine and helping to keep you healthy.
- Make dental appointments early in the day so your child is not tired.
- Arrive a little before the appointment time to let your child become familiar with the new surroundings.
- During the dental visit, let the oral health professional have your child’s full attention.
- Combine the dental visit with a fun activity afterwards like a trip to the park or having a friend over to play.
- Be positive about dental visits and highlight the new, interesting and fun aspects of visiting the dental clinic.
- Prepare your child for what to expect by using story books that involve visits to the dentist.

Frequency of dental check-ups for children

Everyone has different oral health needs and risk levels that determine how often they should have a check-up.
Talk with your oral health professional about how often your child needs a check-up.

**Keeping children’s teeth healthy**

Tips for keeping children’s teeth healthy include:

- Help your child to brush their teeth until they are about seven or eight years old. Brush twice a day – in the morning and before bed at night.
- Supervise your child’s brushing. Ensure they brush every surface of every tooth.
- Offer a wide variety of nutritious foods and have healthy snacks on hand:
  - healthy, low-sugar snacks include: vegetables, cheese, savoury foods
  - less healthy, high-sugar snacks include: sweet biscuits, sweetened or flavoured yoghurts, muesli bars.
- Avoid sugary foods and drinks (including soft drinks, fruit juice and flavoured milk), especially between meals.
- Offer tap water regularly. Most of Victoria’s tap water has fluoride in it, which is good for teeth.
- Look in your child’s mouth often to check for any early signs of tooth decay.

**The Child Dental Benefits Schedule**

The Commonwealth Child Dental Benefits Schedule (CDBS) provides assistance for basic dental treatment over a two-year period for eligible children.

A child is eligible if they are aged 2–17 years, are eligible for Medicare and receive Family Tax Benefit Part A or another relevant Australian Government payment.

Visit Dental Health Services Victoria for more information about the [Child Dental Benefits Schedule](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/).  

**Where to get help**

- [Dental Health Services Victoria](https://www.dhsv.vic.gov.au/) provide public dental services through the [Royal Dental Hospital Melbourne](https://www.royaldentalhospital.com.au/) and community dental clinics, for eligible people. For more information about public dental services Tel. (03) 9341 1000, or 1800 833 039 outside Melbourne metro
- [Australian Dental Association](https://www.adeli.org.au/) ‘Find a Dentist’ search function or Tel. (03) 8825 4600
- Your [GP](https://www.dhsv.vic.gov.au/gp) or practice nurse
- Maternal and child health nurse

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