

Your Child's Dental Timeline

Written by Mark McLaughlin

Tuesday, 26 February 2013 14:58

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BETTENDORF, IA – Every parent welcomes the appearance of baby's first tooth. But, with the appearance of that tooth – and the teeth that will soon follow – comes responsibility. Parents will need to take the child to the dentist, and also teach the child how to brush and floss. Often, parents are not sure when they need to take care of these important dental concerns. “All healthcare needs should follow a regular schedule, and that includes dental care for children,” said Melinda Hochgesang, D.M.D., of Byrum Family Dentistry. “It is important to establish dental care practices early, so your child can enjoy a healthy smile that will last a lifetime.” Byrum Family Dentistry, the dental practice of Robert L. Byrum, D.D.S., P.C., and Melinda Hochgesang, D.M.D., is located at 3878 Middle Road, Bettendorf, IA.

To help parents to stay on-track with their child's dental care, Dr. Hochgesang offers the following timeline. “Many of the developments on the chart take place within an average time range,” she said. “No two children follow the same schedule. For example, a neighbor's child may get her first tooth after four months, but your child's first tooth may not appear until six months have passed. Both children fall within the range noted in the schedule, so there's no cause for concern.”

0 - 12 Months

- The first tooth usually appears when your baby is 4 to 8 months old. Your child has 20 primary teeth (also known as baby teeth) at birth and they will appear gradually.
- Use a damp washcloth to clean your baby's gums after feedings.
- Once the first tooth appears, gently brush with a soft toothbrush, using water and no toothpaste.

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- Avoid giving your baby a bottle at bedtime. This can promote tooth decay.
- As new teeth arrive, your baby's gums may be sore. You can rub your baby's gums for relief. Also, you can use chilled teething rings or pain-relief gels.
- Ideally, your child should first see a dentist between six and twelve months of age.

1 - 3 Years

- More primary teeth will appear.
- You should begin taking your child to the dentist for regular check-ups.
- You should help your child to brush.
- Your child should drink water from a sippy cup.

3 - 7 Years

- All the primary teeth should be in place. Your child will begin losing baby teeth as permanent teeth emerge, usually starting with the molars.
- Discourage thumb-sucking. It may lead to bite problems and crooked teeth.
- At this time, a dentist may place sealants on the child's teeth.
- By preschool, you can teach your child to floss.
- You should still supervise and assist with teeth-brushing. A pea-sized amount of toothpaste can be used, along with products containing fluoride.
- Continue to visit the dentist every six months for regular check-ups.

8 - 13 Years

- By this time, your child will have lost most or all baby teeth.
- Child should be brushing and flossing without assistance.
- Limit soft drinks and sugary/starchy foods.
- Continue visiting the dentist every six months for regular check-ups.
- If necessary, your dentist may recommend a visit to an orthodontist for a consultation.

13 - Early Twenties

- Remind your child to brush twice daily and floss.
- Discourage smoking and other tobacco products, as well as oral piercings.
- Discourage excessive soft drinks and sugary/starchy foods.
- If dental alignment is necessary, your child should be given braces.
- Late teens and early twenties: Your child's wisdom teeth should be evaluated for proper placement and whether the jaw can accommodate them. In some cases, removal may be necessary.
- Continue visiting the dentist every six months for regular check-ups.

Your Child's First Dental Visit "New parents often ask what will happen at their child's first dental visit," Dr. Hochgesang said. "The dentist will examine your child's teeth and gums for tooth decay and other problems. The dentist may take X-rays to see if the teeth are developing properly, and to check for hidden decay. If necessary, your child's teeth will be professionally cleaned, or a follow-up appointment for cleaning will be scheduled. Also, you will also learn preventive home care skills to help protect your child's teeth."

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Dr. Hochgesang noted the importance of setting a good example for your children. "Your child looks to you for guidance," she said. "I strongly encourage all parents to be dental role models for their children. Your child should see that you are diligent about brushing and flossing, and that you visit your dentist regularly."

For more information on Byrum Family Dentistry, call

[\(563\) 332-7734](tel:5633327734)

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