

Everything You Need to Know About Finding a Pediatric Dentistry Practice for Your Child





Your kid's teeth are important. You don't want to entrust your child's smile to just anyone.

Pediatric dentists have additional training to treat young children. Unlike general dentists, pediatric dentists only treat children.

You don't want your child to grow up dreading the dentist's chair, which is why it's so important to find a dentist your child feels comfortable with. As your child grows up, the dentist you choose will always be there to help them maintain good oral habits and ensure a lifetime of healthy teeth.

WHEN SHOULD YOUR CHILD FIRST VISIT THE PEDIATRIC DENTIST?

Your child should first visit the dentist when their first tooth comes in, and **no later than their first birthday**. The earlier your child visits the dentist, the more comfortable they'll be in this new environment.

It's recommended that your child visits the dentist every six months or so to prevent cavities and other dental problems. This may vary depending on your child's unique needs and risks.

A pediatric dentist is trained to deal with children of all ages, from infancy to adolescence, meaning you can stay with the same dentist as your child grows up.



HOW CAN YOU FIND THE RIGHT PEDIATRIC DENTIST FOR YOUR CHILD?

You now know your child needs to see a pediatric dentist. But how do you go about finding the right one for you and your family?

ASK FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

A good place to start is by asking your child's doctor for recommendations. Ask what dentist your pediatrician would send his or her children to. You can also ask your friends and family where they bring their children.

Are you new to the city and are unsure where to begin your search? Make use of online tools to [find dentists in your area](#). Once you've gathered a few options, research these dentists online.

VISIT DENTAL OFFICES

You can only learn so much about a dentist through an online search. The next step is to schedule in-person office visits.

Bring your child in to meet the dentist and get an overall sense of the clinic. No dental work should be done during these consultations—the point is to get a feel for the office, see how the dentist interacts with your child, and ask questions.

If you have other children, it's best to not bring them along to these visits. You want to be able to talk comfortably with the dentist and focus on your child.



WHAT MAKES A GOOD PEDIATRIC DENTIST?

You've scheduled some office visits—great! Now what criteria should you consider when choosing a pediatric dentist? What makes one dental practice better than another?

Here are some factors to consider when meeting potential pediatric dentists.

THE RIGHT QUALIFICATIONS

As previously mentioned, pediatric dentists are specifically trained to deal with children. They've completed at least two years of additional training after graduating from dental school.

Due to their extensive training, pediatric dentists have additional training to care for your child's teeth, gums, and mouth throughout their entire childhood. They also have the communication skills to help the children feel engaged, comforted, and safe when visiting their dentist.



EXTENDED EXPERIENCE

You want what's best for your child. That's why choosing a dentist with extensive experience in treating children is a good idea. But feel free to ask about their experience and training to be confident in which dentist you choose.

THEY HELP CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Children with special needs require dental care like everyone else, but they need some extra attention. Find a pediatric dentist with experience treating children who require specialized dental care. These dentists have a unique understanding of your child's condition and will tailor their approach to your child's needs.

Bring up any concerns you have about your child in the initial consultation with a dentist. If your child requires treatment, your dentist might suggest general anesthesia which would be administered by a licensed institution to ensure they get the most effective treatment while staying safe and comfortable.

Once you've found the right dentist, there's no

need to worry about how well your child will do in the dental chair. Trust that the dentist is fully capable of handling any challenges that may arise.

PERSONAL CARE

When visiting the dentist for the first time, see how the dentist interacts with your child and how your child reacts to the dentist. If possible, watch how the dentist handles children who are upset or scared. The dentist should be warm and friendly, and answer any questions you and your child have.

Like adults, children want to be treated with respect and they appreciate courteous treatment. You don't want your child to feel rushed or overwhelmed at any point. The right pediatric dentist will be attentive to both you and your child's needs to form a long-term relationship based on trust.

If you don't get a good vibe from the dentist or if they don't take the time to discuss your concerns, simply cross them off your list.

FOCUS ON PREVENTION

A good pediatric dentist will focus on preventive dental care. Your pediatric dentist and hygienist will take time to reinforce excellent oral care habits that help prevent cavities. They'll only suggest restorative work like fillings when absolutely necessary.

Dental caries (cavities and tooth decay) is the most common, yet preventable, chronic disease in the world. In fact, 60–90 percent of school-aged children and almost all adults have tooth decay. The dentist will teach your child the proper brushing and flossing techniques that are crucial to prevent cavities. Other key prevention techniques include tooth sealants and fluoride.

But cavities aren't the only thing you'll need to learn about—pediatric dentistry is about more than just teeth care. The dentist will also educate you on the link between diet and oral health, how to care for your infant or toddler's mouth, and how to prevent harmful oral habits like finger and thumb sucking.

Tip: Be a good dental role model for your child. Dentist phobia is common among adults—40 percent of the western population experiences dental fear! Try your best to shield your kids from your anxiety. You don't want to pass down your fears to your children.



WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FOR YOUR CHILD'S FIRST APPOINTMENT?

By bringing your infant to the dentist, you'll help them develop a healthy view of the dental office early on.

During the **first dental visit**, the pediatric dentist or hygienist will review your child's history and discuss any questions or concerns you have. While emergency attention is rarely needed at this age, the dentist will check to make sure.

They'll also talk to you about your child's overall health including:

- Teeth and gum development
- Teething
- Bite (how your child's teeth line up)
- Oral habits
- Factors that increase the risk of cavities
- Advice about home care
- A suggested schedule for follow-up dental care

The dentist may also clean your child's teeth and apply fluoride if they have a high risk of developing cavities.

TIP:

Bring your child's favourite toy or blanket to help them understand that the dental office is a safe and comfortable space.

WHEN SHOULD YOUR CHILD FIRST GET AN X-RAY?

X-rays play an important role in helping the dentist monitor your child's oral health. It allows the dentist to see how your child's permanent teeth are growing in, how their jaws are developing, if they have any bite problems, and whether their teeth are clean and healthy.

Most children will have their first x-rays taken by the time they're five or six, but there's no strict rule about this. Some children who are more at risk of dental problems—like baby bottle tooth decay—should have x-rays taken earlier.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD DENTAL OFFICE?

KID-FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE

Pay attention to the overall atmosphere of the dental office. The right practice will be catered towards children from the waiting room to the dentist chair.

Look at the dental equipment they use—it should be smaller than the equipment in your dentist’s office to comfortably fit children’s mouths.

Is the décor bright and kid friendly? Are there books, toys, and games in the waiting room? Are there TVs in the treatment rooms? If there are other children playing, your child will feel more at home, and they might even make some friends!

WELCOMING STAFF

At the right pediatric dental office, the entire office staff will be friendly and approachable. The receptionist should warmly greet you when you walk in. And if they have any gifts or treats to offer your child after the appointment, all the better!

Both the overall atmosphere and friendly staff should make your child’s experience at the dental office fun.

PARENT POLICY

Want to be in the room with your child during appointments? Ask about the office parental policy.

Pediatric dentists always have your child’s best interests in mind. There may be times when the dentist asks you to remain outside the treatment area to provide the best dental environment possible for your child. With older children, for example, dentists often recommend that parents wait outside so children can better communicate with the dentist and build a relationship of trust with them.

FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING

What are the clinic’s office hours? Do they offer flexible scheduling? Find a dental office that aims to accommodate your busy lifestyle. See if you can bring your child in for appointments before or after school, for example, so they don’t have to miss class.

The right office for your child will also tell you how to reach them in case of an accident or dental emergency.





VARIED FINANCING OPTIONS

You want to find a practice that offers affordable services without sacrificing quality. Ask whether the practice offers flexible payment options and any questions you have about insurance coverage. A good pediatric dentist will do direct billing to your insurance so that you don't have to worry about upfront costs.

Everyone has a different budget, and you don't want to sacrifice your child's dental health due to financial concerns. A good pediatric dentist will discuss the costs of your child's treatments and work to identify a financing plan that best fits your budget.

CONVENIENT LOCATION

When visiting offices, consider how close they are to your home, work, or child's school. You'll be visiting the pediatric dentist every six months, so take your time to find a conveniently located office.

After you've visited several pediatric dental clinics, it's important to take your time and evaluate all the different factors. Weigh the pros and cons, and consider who can provide the best care while ensuring your child's safety and comfort.

BEFORE AND AFTER CASES

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BEFORE



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AFTER



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BEFORE



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AFTER



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SEVERE CROWDING

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