



## Your Child's First Dental Procedure

The first trip to the dentist for something other than a cleaning can be a stressful event for a parent, but it doesn't have to be for the child. They have no experience of their own at the dentist, and can only look to you for guidance. If you can avoid transferring dental anxiety to your child, it will be much quicker and easier for them. Our goals are to get the dentistry done quickly and painlessly and to prevent adult dental anxiety. Here are some tips to make your child's appointment go smoothly:

- Refrain from using the scare tactic to get them to brush their teeth. We have a difficult time managing fearful children when they've been warned that if they don't brush they will have to get a filling or extraction and "it will hurt!"
- In the days prior, it is best not to discuss the appointment at all if possible.
- If you discuss the appointment, don't use negative words—even if you are reassuring them. Do not say "don't worry, it won't hurt." Never use "hurt, pain, needle, pinch, yank, rip, etc.," even as a joke. If your child asks what it will be like, use calming terms like "they will put a band aid on your boo-boo." Or, for older children, "It's no big deal. They just wash the cavity off and put a pretty white filling in". Put a positive face on the treatment to help your child see that getting a filling is a benefit, not a punishment. If they ask detailed questions about the procedure, you can say you don't know what we do now because it's been so long since you were a kid.
- Remind your child that it's common. Everyone goes to the dentist, and most people need tooth fillings at times. You might want to ask someone (especially an older friend or cousin) who's been to the dentist recently, in front of your child, to talk about how easy it was or how soon it was over. Testimonials of this type can help to reassure your child that she's not the first person to have a filling.
- Stay in the waiting room if your child is ok with it, or tell them you will go in until they are settled and then leave. Most kids do fine on their own, but occasionally one may need a little extra encouragement. Also, try to appear calm and relaxed, even if you are not—kids are quick to pick up on subtle cues. We will take exceptional care and treat them like they are our own kids.

Dentistry is much different than it was 20 years ago. We use the latest techniques and materials, but most importantly, we take our time and make kids feel comfortable—we never force them to do anything. Simply telling a child what we are doing and showing them how we do it can go a long way toward earning their trust. We want to build a relationship early on that makes dental appointments 'no big deal'.