

# FINDING THE BEST DENTAL SERVICE PROVIDERS FOR TODDLERS



YOUR GUIDE FOR PREPARATION



**Dentistry**  
for Children and Adolescents  
PEDIATRIC SPECIALISTS



Finding a great pediatric dentist for your child can be rigorous, especially if you don't know what to ask or look for. This e-book aims to provide you with the necessary knowledge to discern if a dental practice is right for you and your child, and also gives you some ideas of what services should be, some common issues to be watching for and what you can do at home to help.

We believe we have the qualifications you'll need to feel satisfied with our services and become a proud client of ours! At the end, you'll find our contact information if you wish to speak with us!



## Dental Care Starts at Home

This may seem obvious, but dentists aren't miracle workers (we try though)! The best dental practices and care begin at home with your child each morning and evening. Prevention of cavities and other problematic issues is the most effective way to keep your child's smile protected.

There are many milestones in the first years of your child's life. Things like walking, talking, eating solid foods are all important times for both you and your child (especially if you're a first-time parent).

Knowing what to watch out for when it comes to a toddler's dental health is key. Therefore, we recommend:

- Start using Fluoride at the instance of tooth eruption to avoid tooth decay and cavities. For children under three, use a rice-size amount of fluoride toothpaste. For children three to six years of age, begin using a pea-size amount.
- Fluoride rinse is not recommended for children under the age of six.
- Floss once a day.
- Use a child-size toothbrush with soft bristles to protect their gums and prevent erosion. Adult-sized toothbrushes can miss the small corners and crevices and may have stiff bristles that can hurt their mouth.
- Get rid of pacifiers! Anything that a toddler may use for oral comfort has simply got to go. Sippy cups should be out of the question as well unless it's with a meal or snack. Thumbsucking is a definite no-no for a myriad of reasons, which you can read about in more detail [here](#).
- Start brushing twice a day, and find a routine. Practice makes perfect, the earlier you start the easier it will be for them to remember to take care of their teeth. Make it fun for them so it seems less like a chore. Brushing correctly, and not quickly, is important.



## What to Look For in a Pediatric Dentist



Choosing a competent, patient professional from among the many pediatric dental offices in your area can seem daunting. But, it doesn't have to be! Of course, many people turn to their friends and families for recommendations. Often, your pediatrician will have several recommendations ready for you. But, when all else fails what should your research focus on?

- Make a list. What does the right pediatric dentist mean to you? Does it mean an office that's close to both work and school? Are up-to-date modern pediatric dental treatments the most important facet?
- Ask about training – a pediatric dentist has two additional years of residency training for infants, kids, teens and special needs children.
- Additionally, a dentist should belong to organized dentistry with the ADA being the most common group. Belonging to a group ensures they attend regular continuing education and abides by ethical standards.
- Look online. Read reviews about the offices in your area and see what other parents are saying about each office.
- Make use of the AAPD's pediatric dentist search tool. It's a great resource for finding offices in your area.
- When visiting an office, make mental notes of the waiting room and procedure areas. Does their office setting seem kid-friendly with things that can make them feel more at home? What's their staff's bedside manner like? Scheduling a meet and greet should be no problem for most offices, so do so to get a feel for their office and staff.



## The First Visit

The American Dental Association (also known as the ADA) recommends that you plan your child's first visit within six months after the first tooth appears and no later than their first birthday. A typical first visit to the dentist (or hygienist) should go like this:

- Check for oral hygiene, injuries, cavities, or other problems
- Determine the level of risk your child is at for tooth decay
- Assess tooth development
- Clean your child's teeth
- Apply a fluoride treatment as recommended by the AAPD (the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry)

Aside from these standard procedures, you'll want an office that is staffed with people that aim to make your child comfortable with the entire ordeal! Bright smiles, laughing, a chair ride and a high-five or two always help break a child in slowly to the idea of visiting us.

We want them to see us as friendly helpers, not dentists! Building their confidence in us (and yours as well) is one of the most important goals. When subsequent visits may include such scary machines and procedures like dental x-rays, ensuring their comfort and confidence is our top priority next to providing excellent care and service.







## Common Dental Issues to Watch Out For



**Baby Bottle Tooth Decay** happens when a baby's teeth are in frequent contact with sugars from drinks such as fruit juices, milk, formula or any other sweet drink. If your toddler is still in the habit of taking a bottle, you should be actively weaning him or her off of it.

If left unchecked, decayed teeth can cause pain making it difficult to chew and eat. If baby teeth are damaged or destroyed, they can't help guide permanent teeth into their proper position which can result in crowding or crooked placement. Read more about how to prevent this in our blog linked above.

**Tongue Thrusting** is another common issue and is the habit of sealing the mouth for swallowing by thrusting the top of the tongue forward against the lips. This exerts pressure against the front teeth, forcing them out of alignment and causing them to protrude. This causes an overbite to form and can interfere with speech development.

If you notice these symptoms, consult a speech pathologist. They can help develop a treatment plan to increase the strength of chewing muscles and develop a new swallowing pattern.



## Common Dental Issues to Watch Out For

**Lip Sucking** is the repeated holding of the lower lip beneath the upper front teeth and can occur in combination with thumb-sucking. This results in an overbite and the same problems seen with tongue thrusting. Stopping this habit generally involves the same steps as thumbsucking.

**Early Tooth Loss** typically occurs from tooth decay, injury, or lack of jaw space. As space savers for permanent teeth, losing these can result in shifting or tipping which can lead to many problems down the road.

Consulting with a pediatric dentist in this instance is crucial. They may recommend a space maintainer, a plastic or metal device that holds the space left by the missing tooth, to remedy the issue. This device is removed once the permanent teeth begin to erupt.





Ensure your child is receiving the best dental care by selecting the right provider for your family's needs. At Dentistry for Children and Adolescents, we deliver oral health care that is comprehensive, accessible and family-centered for children and adolescents.

To learn more about us and the services we can provide your family, call either one of our locations:

**Creve Coeur, MO at 314-567-1122**

**St. Charles, MO at 636-946-5225**