

# What is a Pediatric Dentist?

*Pediatric Dentists* are dedicated to the oral health of children from infancy through the teen years. They have the experience and qualifications to care for a child's teeth, gums, and mouth throughout the various stages of childhood.

Children begin to get their baby teeth during the first 6 months of life. By age 6 or 7 years, they start to lose their first set of teeth, which eventually are replaced by secondary, permanent teeth. Without proper dental care, children face possible oral decay and disease that can cause a lifetime of pain and complications. Today, early childhood dental caries—an infectious disease—is 5 times more common in children than asthma and 7 times more common than hay fever.

## What kind of training do pediatric dentists have?

Pediatric dentists have completed at least

- Four years of dental school
- Two additional years of residency training in dentistry for infants, children, teens, and children with special needs

## What types of treatments do pediatric dentists provide?

Pediatric dentists provide comprehensive oral health care that includes the following:

- Infant oral health exams, which include risk assessment for caries in mother and child
- Preventive dental care including cleaning and fluoride treatments, as well as nutrition and diet recommendations
- Habit counseling (for example, pacifier use and thumb sucking)
- Early assessment and treatment for straightening teeth and correcting an improper bite (orthodontics)
- Repair of tooth cavities or defects
- Diagnosis of oral conditions associated with diseases such as diabetes, congenital heart defect, asthma, hay fever, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder
- Management of gum diseases and conditions including ulcers, short frenulae, mucocoeles, and pediatric periodontal disease
- Care for dental injuries (for example, fractured, displaced, or knocked-out teeth)

## Where can I find a pediatric dentist?

Pediatric dentists practice in a variety of locations including private practices, dental schools, and medical centers. Your pediatrician can help you find a pediatric dentist near your home.

## Pediatric dentists—the best care for children

Children are not just small adults. They are not always able to be patient and cooperative during a dental exam. Pediatric dentists know how to examine and treat children in ways that make them comfortable. In addition, pediatric dentists use specially designed equipment in offices that are arranged and decorated with children in mind.

A pediatric dentist offers a wide range of treatment options, as well as expertise and training to care for your child's teeth, gums, and mouth. When your pediatrician suggests that your child receive a dental exam, you can be assured that a pediatric dentist will provide the best possible care.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

From your doctor

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of Pediatrics



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