



“Ask the Dental Hygienist”



When should I start brushing my baby's teeth?

As soon as the first tooth erupts, you should begin cleaning your baby's teeth either with a cloth such as a baby washcloth or use a baby toothbrush. Clean the teeth at least twice daily.



I see dark spots on my child's molars. Is that a cavity?

A dark spot is not necessarily a cavity; sometimes the grooves in the molars can become stained. Your child does need regular dental exams beginning at age 1 so that all the teeth can be checked for any problems and the dentist can determine if the dark spots you see are decay or just stain.



I think my child needs braces. When should I take him to an orthodontist?

Your child's regular dentist can advise you. Your dentist will probably suggest an evaluation by the orthodontist by around age 7 to see if there is preventive or preliminary treatment that can be started at an early age to shorten the orthodontic treatment period later. By taking x-rays and examining your child, they can determine the development and eruption progress.



How often should I buy a new toothbrush?

Most people need to replace their toothbrush every 3 months. A worn toothbrush is not effective in removing plaque. Of course, if you have been sick (such as with a cold, flu, strep throat, virus) you should throw away your brush when you start to get better to avoid making yourself sick again from those bad germs.



Can mouth piercing be dangerous for me?

There is a chance of pain, swelling, and infection if the piercing and the aftercare is not handled very carefully. Also, there is risk of chipping or fracturing the teeth from the metal jewelry. Other adverse outcomes are gum trauma, increased amounts of hardened plaque on the teeth, and interference with speech and swallowing. You should consult your dentist or doctor before proceeding.



Do all wisdom teeth need to be removed?

There are some folks who are fortunate enough to actually have room for the third molars to come in properly and they function as well as the other molars in their mouth. Many times this is not the case; they may be impacted (positioned such that they cannot erupt) or there just may not be enough room for them. The gum can become infected if they can only partially erupt. An x-ray can determine if you have all 4 third molars and how they are positioned. Your dentist may refer you to an oral surgeon to have all 4 surgically removed at one visit and patients are usually going strong again after 2-3 days healing.