

I Am Going to the Dentist

What Does a Dentist Do?

A dentist is a doctor who cares for teeth. When you visit your dentist for a check-up, he or she will look at your teeth and gums to check for any problems. The dentist also wants to make sure your teeth are developing properly as you grow.



To ensure that your teeth and gums are healthy, it is important to visit the dentist every six months.

What Happens at the Dentist's Office?

First you will check in at the front desk to let them know you are there.



Then you will wait in the waiting room until the dental hygienist calls you into the exam room.



Usually when you arrive at the dentist's office, you will meet with the dental hygienist before you meet with the dentist. A dental hygienist knows all about keeping gums clean and healthy.

When you get to the exam room you will sit down in a big, comfortable chair that reclines back. There is a place to rest your head and a lot of room to stretch out your legs.



Next to your chair will probably be a little sink with a cup that you can use to rinse your mouth as the dental hygienist cleans your teeth.



A bright, overhead light will shine down into your mouth like a giant flashlight so the dental hygienist can get a good look inside your mouth while she cleans, polishes, brushes and flosses your teeth.



The dental hygienist will clean your teeth, using tiny dental tools like a mirror and tooth scraper.



Next the dental hygienist will brush your teeth with a special toothbrush and toothpaste. She may also put a small hose in your mouth to suction out any spit.



Then the dental hygienist will floss your teeth and show you the correct way to brush and floss your teeth at home.



During some visits, the dental hygienist will take X-rays, or pictures, of your teeth to check for cavities. It does not hurt to get an X-ray and it takes only a few seconds.



Cavities are a decayed part of your tooth that need repair to be healthy again.

The dental hygienist will place a thick blanket over your chest (to protect your body from the high-energy waves) and put a piece of plastic, which holds the X-ray film into your mouth.



As you gently bite down on the plastic, you'll have to be very still for a few seconds while the dental hygienist snaps the picture. For some people, the plastic makes them feel like they are going to gag. This does not happen to everyone and it is over quick.

After your X-rays it is time for fluoride treatment. Fluoride is a natural mineral that helps your teeth stay strong and helps prevent cavities.

The dental hygienist will put a fluoride gel or foam on your teeth. Most dental offices offer flavored fluoride like bubble gum or grape.



The fluoride treatment takes about one to four minutes. The dental hygienist will probably tell you not to eat or drink for 30 minutes after the fluoride treatment.

Next you will meet the dentist. The dentist will check your teeth and gums to make sure they are strong and healthy. The dentist will also probably check the way your top and bottom teeth work together. This is called your **bite**.



The dentist will study your X-rays to see if you have any cavities.



The dentist will also ask you if you have any questions or problems with your teeth.



When your check-up is over, the dentist will usually send you home with gifts such as a new tooth brush and dental floss.



Check out at the desk before you leave and set your next appointment. Make sure you have another check-up scheduled in 6 months.



If you have a cavity you will schedule an appointment to come back soon and get it taken care of.

During that visit, the dentist will remove the decayed part of your tooth with dental tools, like a dental drill, and fill in the area with special materials, called fillings, to keep your tooth strong and healthy.



When you sit down in the dentist's chair to get your filling, the dentist will give you a shot with an anesthetic to numb your mouth so getting the filling won't hurt. The shot will pinch but will be over quick.



When you leave the dentist's office your mouth will feel numb for a little while but the feeling will wear off soon.

Always go to your dentist appointments to keep your mouth healthy and clean!

THE END

I understand that not every situation is the same. Gender and ethnicity can vary with practitioners (and patients) as well as the order of events and the procedures during an appointment. Feel free to discuss this with your child/client while reading the story if you think it will help with the visit. Limited access to images made it a bit difficult to capture all this diversity within the story. You can make your own story, using real pictures from your child's or another child's appointment or pictures from Google Images.

For a fun activity, your child can draw pictures of what may happen on their own appointment that is different from this story.