Preparing Your Child For a Dental Visit

Preparing your child for a dental appointment well in advance can build excitement and develop an understanding of what to expect during the visit. Consider the tips below to help your child plan for and visualize a successful trip to the dentist.

1. Ask the dentist if you can schedule a tour of the office so your child can become familiar with the office location, waiting room, and staff.

2. Take your child along with you (or with their siblings) for a dental appointment so they can watch and become more comfortable.

3. Use a visual schedule or social story to prepare for a dental cleaning. This will help break down each step of the teeth-cleaning process. An example of a social story can be found here.

4. Make the dental appointment when your child is less likely to be tired, such as early in the morning or following a nap.

5. When talking with your child, use positive language about going to the dentist, such as "Today we get to make a trip to the dentist's office to show off how great you have been taking care of your teeth!" Avoid words like "hurt," "pain," "scared," "shot," "needle," or "drill."

6. Bring their favorite toy, blanket, or object to hold.

7. Read books about the dentist with your child. Below are some suggested titles.
   - *Brush Your Teeth!* by Katie Marsico
   - *Floss Your Teeth!* by Katie Marsico
   - *What Happens When I Go to the Dentist?* by Lisa Idzikowski
   - *Around Town Dentist's Office* by Adeline J. Zimmerman
   - *Katie Woo's Neighborhood Open Wide, Katie!* by Fran Manushkin
   - *Sesame Street: Ready, Set, Brush! A Pop-up Book* by Che Rudko – geared towards younger kids

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