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Down Syndrome Dental Health Guide



Jeff Kinner, DDS

Special Children with Special Challenges

Good behavior in the pediatric dental office is learned. In children with learning disabilities, this may be a special challenge. Treatment objectives for any population with developmental disabilities will be the same as that of other patients. Treatment needs to be adapted, as necessary, to each individual's condition. The overall goal should be to provide as comprehensive treatment as possible.

Children with Down syndrome (DS) often have very specific dental needs that will require very specific anticipatory guidance for the parents or caregivers. Children with DS may have missing or extra teeth. The upper jaw and nose tend to be under-developed which gives the tongue a relatively large size: this often leads to mouth breathing. The teeth may also be shaped differently or slow to erupt. Often there is an "under-bite" or cross-bite.

Oral Hygiene is Critically Important

Fortunately, Down syndrome children tend to be more resistant to decay than children without DS. Unfortunately, children with Down Syndrome tend to be more prone to gum disease at an earlier age. It is recommended that the parents brush and floss their child's teeth at least twice a day. This practice may have to be continued indefinitely with the child, as motor skills may not develop well enough to independently brush and floss. Use non-fluoridated toothpaste up to age two. At age two, begin to use toothpaste with fluoride.

A mechanical toothbrush, that has sound and movement somewhat similar to a dental prophylaxis cup, may help your child cope better with dental cleaning appointments. Tooth brushing may be done with your child's head in your lap. In a way, this is similar to the position the dentist uses in a dental office setting. This may help your child more readily adapt to a dental office setting.

If your child is resistant, use a two-parent system to brush the teeth until your child is more cooperative. The two parents sit knee to knee on chairs or stools with the child sitting

on one parent's lap, straddling and facing that parent. Then, the child can lay his head in the other parent's lap. The first parent holds the child's hands on his stomach while the second parent does the brushing or flossing. This is the same knee to knee position dentist's will often use with younger patients in the dental office, so it will help your child learn to cope in this position. Keep this same routine every day. Reward good behavior with lots of praises!

Does Your Child have a History of Heart Conditions?

Often children with Down syndrome have heart conditions requiring antibiotics before dental visits. If your child requires SBE antibiotic prophylaxis, please have their cardiologist or pediatrician give you a prescription for the first dental visit. Take the prescription as recommended on the bottle and bring the empty bottle with you to the first dental appointment. Also bring a History and Physical report, from your child's cardiologist, with you to the first dental visit. If you ask for one, your child's physician will know what information to give you. For future visits, Dr. Kinner writes the antibiotic prescription those children requiring SBE prophylaxis. Most physicians follow American Heart Association guidelines, which is what Dr. Kinner follows.

First Dental Visit by the First Birthday

When you call for your child's first dental visit, please let our receptionist know your child has Down syndrome. Also let the receptionist know if your child requires antibiotics before dental treatment. Please let Dr. Kinner know if your child has neck instability problems before the exam.

Dr. Kinner welcomes parents in the treatment area. Parents are often a great asset to Dr. Kinner, informing him of the appropriate level of communication. Children with DS often understand more than they can express verbally. Expect a lot of the visit to involve anticipatory guidance and informational literature from Dr. Kinner.

jk
Dr. Jeff Kinner
The Children's Dentist

Call: (702) 838-9013

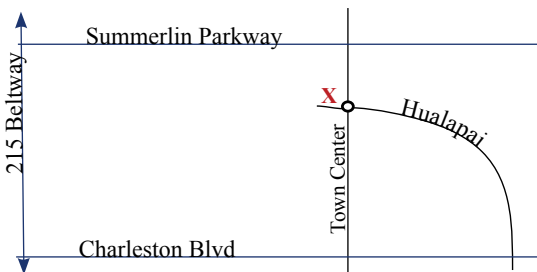
Hours:

Monday.....	By Appointment
Tuesday.....	7:30am - 5:00pm
Wednesday.....	7:30am - 5:00pm
Thursday.....	7:30am - 5:00pm
Friday.....	8:00am - 12:00
Saturday and Sunday.....	Closed

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