FAQs About Your Child’s Teeth
Some Dental Questions Parents Frequently Ask
(& some important answers)
By Mark A. Breiner, DDS

From the moment your baby’s first teeth erupt, they need to be cared for. At every stage of a child’s growth, good oral hygiene can and should be encouraged. However, given that children’s physical systems are more vital and reactive than those of adults, parents need to be especially prudent about the dental decisions they make for their children. These dental choices can have an impact for years to come.

Having seen both children and their parents in my dental practice for more than 30 years, I’d like to share with you some of the questions I am frequently asked, and the answers I give.

**My child’s first teeth are coming in decayed…why?**

When a baby falls asleep at the mother’s breast or with a bottle still in his or her mouth, the emerging baby teeth are being continuously bathed in the milk sugar and are thus susceptible to decay. It has also been my observation that decay occurs more frequently in babies whose mother is a vegetarian and is breastfeeding. Last but not least, some children are just more susceptible to tooth decay. Homeopathic treatments—which address the child’s whole system—can be of significant benefit.

**Since my child’s baby teeth are going to fall out, do I even have to be concerned about treating decay?**

Yes, the decay can progress to the point of producing a toothache and an abscess, conditions that may necessitate the extraction of a tooth. Under ideal circumstances, your child’s front teeth will be in place until six or seven years of age. These teeth are very important for proper speech development. The baby molars are normally retained until ten to thirteen years of age. If these are lost prematurely, the permanent molars will come in and move forward, blocking the space needed for the permanent teeth. This situation will necessitate orthodontics.

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My child’s permanent front teeth are coming in with white spots. Why is this happening?

White spots on permanent teeth are almost always the result of ingesting too much fluoride. Studies have shown that 30-40% of children today have this problem. These spots form because fluoride interferes with collagen production. This interference is not just confined to the teeth, and thus fluoride can have additional negative systemic ramifications.

At what age should I start bringing my child to the dentist?

A good time to bring your child to a dentist’s office is at three years of age. Your child can see the hygienist for tooth polishing; he or she may also ride in the chair and squirt the water, to make it a fun experience. Of course, if you suspect any problems prior to that time, you should immediately bring your child to the dentist.

How do I care for my toddler’s teeth?

When the teeth first come in (usually at 6 to 9 months of age) wiping the teeth with a washcloth or gauze pad is sufficient. As the child gets older and permits it, use a small toothbrush with soft bristles and dental floss.

A dentist said my child will need braces. Should I wait until all the permanent teeth are in place?

No. Often there is not enough room for permanent teeth or there is a structural problem in the way the lower jaw meets the upper jaw. It is best to begin to address these situations at an early age, when the first permanent molars have erupted. Consult with an orthodontist and let the orthodontist determine the ideal time to start treatment; that time is almost always before all the permanent teeth are in.

My child is highly allergic. Do I have to be concerned about the materials used in orthodontics?

Yes. Often the orthodontic metals are nickel-based. Ten percent of the population is reactive to nickel. Today there are alternatives to using nickel. If your child has experienced more colds or a decline in health while wearing braces, he or she may be reactive to the dental materials used.

My child has a cavity, should I be concerned about materials being used to restore the teeth?

Yes. NEVER let a dentist place a “silver” filling in your child’s teeth. These fillings are half mercury, and we all know that mercury is dangerous. Ask your dentist to use a tooth-colored composite filling.

My dentist wants to take X-rays of my child’s teeth, is this a good idea?

No one likes to have X-rays taken. As with everything in dentistry, one must evaluate the benefits and risks. The main reason for X-rays in young children is to check for decay between the teeth. Often transillumination with a bright light will reveal decay between the baby teeth and X-rays can be avoided. If you or your dentist suspects decay, it is better to take an X-ray than to end up with a toothache. When all the permanent teeth are in, transillumination does not work well on the back teeth; for those, X-rays are a good idea. In trying to limit radiation exposure in adults and youngsters, I base the frequency of taking X-rays on the child’s previous history of decay. Digital X-rays keep radiation to a minimum.

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My dentist wants to apply sealants to my child’s teeth, is this necessary?

Because deep grooves in the molar teeth very often become decayed, filling these grooves will prevent this from happening. A dental sealant is a liquid composite that flows into the grooves and is then hardened with a high intensity light. Prior to applying a sealant, it is important to check for decay in the grooves. There are electronic dental instruments that detect decay and should be used prior to using the sealant. I think it is unnecessary to seal teeth that do not have deep grooves. I prefer placing tiny composite fillings in deep grooves, as sealants are often lost and begin to leak with time. These problems rarely occur when tiny composite restorations are used.

Why seek a holistic approach for your child’s dental care?

I believe that Whole-Body Dentistry promotes both a healthy mouth and a healthy body. When alternative holistic dental approaches are combined with solid traditional dentistry, the outcome is one that optimizes each patient’s health and well-being. It is a win-win formula!

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Dr. Mark A. Breiner is a licensed dentist and in his new book, Whole-Body Dentistry®: A Complete Guide to Understanding the Impact of Dentistry on Total Health, he stresses the importance of using the safest possible treatment approaches for both children and adults.

Dr. Breiner maintains a private practice in Connecticut. For more information, please see his web site at www.WholeBodyDentistry.com.

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To request a review copy of Whole-Body Dentistry®, to arrange an interview with Dr. Breiner, to receive cover, or for any additional information, please contact: Kate Bandos at KSB Promotions: 800-304-3269, 616-676-0758 or kate@ksbpromotions.com.