**First Visit**

At a typical first visit in our clinics, you and your child will sit down with the dental provider to discuss your child’s needs and factors that could be placing your child at risk for dental disease. Then, your child’s teeth will be cleaned and a detailed examination, including appropriate radiographs, will be conducted. You and your dental provider will then discuss our plan to treat your child’s specific dental needs. Our treatment plans are customized for each patient and address behavior guidance techniques, growth and development, prevention of future disease, and treatment of any existing disease.

**Clinic Policies**

For the protection of your child, UAB requires that a legal guardian bring their child to each dental appointment.

We ask that patients make every effort to be on time. However, we also recognize that finding parking around the school can be challenging. Therefore, we offer a 20-minute window past your appointed time in which we will guarantee your appointment slot. Our commitment to other appointed patients may require that we reschedule patients arriving more than 20 minutes after their appointment time.

Co-pays and payments are required at the time of service.

**Payment**

The UAB School of Dentistry is a preferred provider organization for MetLife, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama, and Medicaid. Co-payments for In Network Services are due at the time of service. Additionally, if a patient's condition meets the criteria for a medical claim, we will file Medicare and other medical insurance on your behalf.

For all out-of-network insurance, both Medical and Dental, the Business Office will assist in filing these claims, however, full payment for treatment will be required at the time of service. Payment can be made by cash, check, or major credit card. Please contact the Business Office with insurance and billing questions at (205) 934-1293.

**Tips and Prevention**

**Watch What You Drink!**

Cavities Occur when frequent exposure to sugar causes bacteria (plaque) on the teeth to produce acid. Most kids’ drinks are full of sugar—even natural juices! One fun drink a day is fine—after that, stick with white milk or water.

**Brush Away the Plaque!**

Brush in the morning for good breath and right before bedtime to remove the bacteria. Focus the brush right where the teeth and gums come together, and floss between any teeth that touch.

**Visit the Dentist Twice a Year!**

A professional cleaning can make your teeth whiter by removing ugly stains, and the dental team can coach your child on how to best clean their own teeth. And a dentist can find cavities or other problems while they are still small and easy to fix.

**Did You Know?**

* The first permanent teeth come in at 5-7 years of age and are usually the lower front teeth or the back molars, behind all the baby teeth. The last baby tooth often does not fall out until 10-12 years of age.
* Baby teeth often have space between them—and this helps keep them clean.
* Cavities in baby teeth can hurt, and hurting teeth have been shown to decrease a child’s performance in school.
* While most types of crooked teeth can be straightened after all the permanent teeth have come in, sometimes earlier treatment is best.

**FAQs**

**Q: Why are baby teeth important?**

A: Children with healthy teeth have been shown to be healthier, perform better in school, and have higher self-esteem. Baby teeth have nerves in them that can cause toothaches just like permanent teeth, and dental infections can actually spread more rapidly in children than in adults. Also, the baby teeth help guide the permanent teeth into the mouth and into the correct position.

**Q: What causes tooth decay?**

A: There are many factors that contribute to tooth decay. Simply put, specific bacteria in our mouths feed off of any sugars we eat, and then they drop acid onto our teeth. If this occurs often, the tooth will begin to dissolve away, creating a “cavity.” Our experience is that tooth decay in children is often related to what they drink. Have you ever looked at how much sugar is in one bottle of apple juice? It is not uncommon to for a 10oz bottle of apple juice to contain 8 teaspoons (31 grams) of natural sugar!! Artificial juice drinks can have 11 teaspoons of sugar! This is too much sugar for the teeth or the body.

**Q: How Can I Help My Child Prevent Dental Problems?**

It’s much better to prevent childhood dental problems now than to treat them in the future. Luckily, it’s easy to help your child learn good habits for healthy teeth.

**Q: What is a “Pediatric Dentist”?**

A: Pediatric dentists, in addition to completion of four years of dental school, have completed a two- or three-year residency program providing additional training specific to treating the dental needs of children and people with special needs. Pediatric dental residency programs include advanced training and experience with behavior guidance techniques, sedation, general anesthesia, growth and development, interceptive orthodontics, medically compromised children, and special needs individuals.

**Q: When should my child first see the dentist?**

A: Preventing dental disease is always better than fixing its damage! Therefore, we recommend a child first see a dentist by age 1 or within six months of getting their first tooth. At this early visit, called a Well Baby Dental Visit, you will receive information about how to keep your baby’s teeth and mouth healthy and what to avoid that can make this more difficult in the future.

**Q: What if my child is scared of dental treatment?**

A: If your child is scared of coming to the dentist, please know you are not alone. At UAB, we recognize that having someone looking inside your mouth can be an intimidating thing. That is why we are committed to not just “treating teeth.” We want to coach our patients into being comfortable with dentistry. We have many techniques that can help with this, but the most important is communication. Also, if advanced behavioral techniques are needed, we believe that you as the parent should be an integral part of the decision process on which techniques are best for your child.

**Q: What should I tell my child before an appointment with the dentist?**

A: We recommend not making a big deal about coming to the dentist. Simply let the child know that they are coming to see the dentist, the dentist is nice and if they will listen, the dentist will tell them everything they are going to do. Please avoid making jokes about needles, shots, pulling teeth out, etc. While as adults we get the joke, often children don’t and they can become seriously scared!!

**Q: Who will see my child at the School of Dentistry?**

A: Treatment is provided by a team headed by a Board Certified or Board Eligible Pediatric Dental specialist. Residents, who are receiving specialized training specific to the treatment of children, dental students, who are training to become general dentists, and dental assistants complete the team.

**Q: I have been referred because my child needs to be “put to sleep” for dental care. What should I expect?**

A: General anesthesia or oral sedation are valuable behavior guidance techniques for some children. However, these techniques do have associated risks involved, so we never want to use them unprepared. If you have been referred for treatment of this type, please understand that your first visit will be a consultation only where the actual treatment will be planned and discussed with you. We will NEVER provide sedation or general anesthesia treatment during a first visit.