

Prepare Your Child for That Dental Office Trip

(This is one of a series of articles on dental health prepared by the Harbor Dental Society, an affiliate of the American Dental Association.)

Small children need careful preparation for any new experience, and a visit to the dental office is no exception.

A child's first visit to the dentist should be a pleasant one, since his first impressions will influence his attitude toward dental care for the rest of his life. And, his parents have an important role in making the visit pleasant.

The child's first visit should

come when he's between age two and a half and three, when all the first teeth are in and, if possible, before treatment is needed. Often the first visit consists of only an oral examination. If small areas of decay are found that need treatment, the dentist may decide to work on them.

USUALLY, however, nothing more than a routine check-up, perhaps an x-ray examination, and cleaning of the teeth is all that is necessary.

Purpose of the examination is to be sure that everything is as it should be — the first teeth in good condition and

the second ones developing properly.

The x-ray examination will detect any problems such as extra teeth or beginning cavities on the hidden surfaces of the teeth. It will show if the permanent teeth are forming and in proper position.

SUCH examination makes it possible to catch difficulties early, when correction is easiest, most effective, and reasonably free of discomfort.

When the child visits the dentist, the dentist will explain the instruments he is going to use — the mouth mirror, explorer and the

x-ray machine. He will tell the child what he is going to do and why. He may use illustrated pamphlets, records or even a movie to explain good oral hygiene. A gift from the toy box and a compliment to the youngster for his good behavior efforts in the dental chair help to leave a happy impression.

Dentists suggest that appointments be made for children in the morning; a child accepts new experiences more readily when he's not tired.

BUT THE MOST important ingredient for early success in dental care is the parents' own attitude.

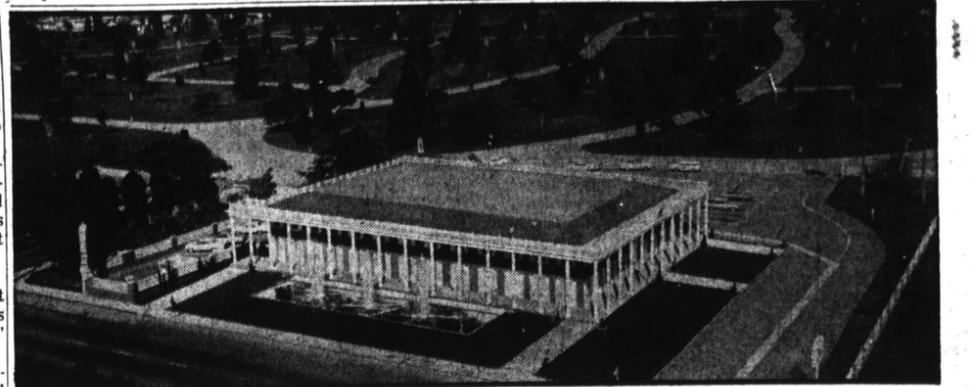
It should be casual and explanatory. Tell the child what he will probably see at the dentist's office. Avoid references to your own painful experiences or to your bravery in the dental chair. A child should never be bribed to make this first visit

or he will expect it to be unpleasant.

Explain dental care in a

positive way. How it works for your child's good health, good teeth and nice smile.

You'll want to prepare in developing positive life-attitudes toward dental first visit. It's the first step.



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