

# School-Ready Smiles

No back-to-school checklist is complete without a visit to the dentist. A dental checkup should be part of a child's routine as the school year begins, along with a visit to the doctor for a checkup and immunizations.

It's hard to learn when your teeth hurt! More than 40 percent of children entering kindergarten suffer from tooth decay<sup>1</sup>, and more than 19 percent of children ages 2-19 have untreated cavities.<sup>2</sup> Tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease in the country, and every year children miss 51 million hours of school because of oral health problems.<sup>3</sup> Students who are absent miss critical instruction time, especially in the early grades where basic math and reading skills are taught.

Regular dental checkups are important because your dentist can find small problems before they become big and painful.

In addition to visiting the dentist, parents should encourage their child to brush with fluoride toothpaste twice a day for two minutes each time and floss every day. It's important to brush or rinse with water after lunch, even at school.



## Did you know?

The number of students with tooth decay between the ages of 12 and 19 is almost 60 percent.<sup>4</sup>



# Quick Bites

**During most routine dental visits, the dentist or dental hygienist will:**

- Review your child's dental and medical history
- Look for cavities
- Make sure teeth are growing properly and gums are healthy
- Clean and polish teeth
- Check the way your child's top and bottom teeth work together
- Apply fluoride treatments or sealants as needed
- Take dental X-rays when necessary
- Talk about the best ways to brush and floss



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overall health!

1. Pierce KM, Rozier RG and Vann WF Jr., "Accuracy of Pediatric Primary Care Providers' Screening and Referral for Early Childhood Caries," *Pediatrics* 109, no. 5 (2002): e82. 2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Untreated Dental Caries (Cavities) in Children Ages 2-19, United States," web. 3. National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, "Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General—Executive Summary," web. 4. National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, "Dental Caries (Tooth Decay) in Adolescents (Age 12 to 19)," web.

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