

Timeline and Tasks for Children's Dental Appointments



Step 1: Make an appointment



First, **gather information** that you will need to make an appointment, including your calendar (so you can choose a convenient time) and your child's dental health insurance card, date of birth, allergies, and current medications, because you may be asked to provide this information.



Second, **call the dental office** when you have **time**, because you may have to wait on hold for a few minutes, and **privacy**, since you may need to share personal information about you and your child.



Third, explain the reason for your child's visit **and ask for an appointment** at a date and time that are convenient for you. The reason for the appointment may be a problem with your child's teeth or a routine check-up. Ask about documents and information you will need to bring on the day of your child's appointment. If needed, also request an interpreter and ask about payment options for low-income families and eligibility requirements.

Step 2: Prepare for the appointment



Write any questions you may have about your child's dental health before the appointment.



If your child has a specific dental problem, **write down your child's symptoms**, when the symptoms started, and if anything makes your child's symptoms better or worse, such as eating hot or cold foods or chewing.



Gather all the documents and information you will need for your child's appointment, including your written questions, your child's dental health insurance card, and any information you may need to provide as proof of your eligibility for special programs and services, if needed.



Step 3: Go to the appointment



Arrive on time for your child's appointment. Call at least a day before if you need to cancel or change your appointment. Some providers charge you a fee for not showing up.



Ask questions to ensure you understand your child's diagnosis (what the health problem is), treatment plan (what you need to do to maintain or improve your child's dental health), and follow-up instructions, including returning for a check-up, scheduling medical tests, or going to a specialist.



"Teach back" what the provider tells you, whether that person is a dentist or a staff member providing instructions for your child's dental health. To teach back, simply repeat what the provider says in your own words. For example, "Before I leave, I want to make sure I understand everything you told me. Here's what I think you said: My child has healthy teeth and to keep my child's teeth healthy, we need to brush and floss twice a day, and avoid sweets, including candy, juice, and sodas. Also, I need to bring my child back in six months for a check-up and cleaning. Did I miss anything?"

Step 4: Follow up after the appointment



After the appointment, **follow the dental provider's instructions.**



Make follow-up appointments with your child's dental provider or specialists as directed.



If needed, **purchase any prescription medications** or recommended over-the-counter products. Ask the pharmacist or call the dental office if you don't understand how to give your child a medication.

If your child requires medications, remember that prescription medications must be taken:

- By the right person—the person for whom the medication was prescribed
- In the right dose—the amount the dentist prescribed
- At the right time—at the time of day specified (e.g., twice a day, with meals, at night)