



# Age One Dental Visit Lesson Plan



Texas Department of State  
Health Services

OHIP-095

[dshs.texas.gov/SmilesforMoms](https://dshs.texas.gov/SmilesforMoms)

# Lesson Plan

## Audience:

Public, parents, caregivers, home visitors, community health workers

## Lesson Objectives:

The audience should be able to:

- Discuss at what age children should go to the dentist for their first dental appointment.
- Describe what happens during a child's first dental visit.
- Discuss and show proper oral hygiene for mom and baby.

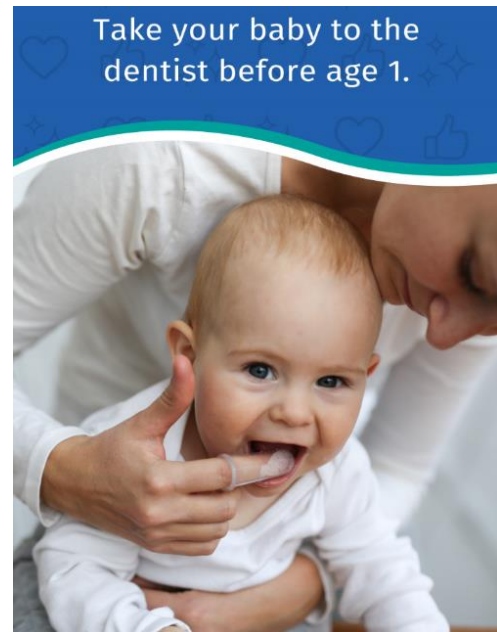
## Key Messages:

- Your child's first dental visit should take place after the first tooth appears, but no later than their first birthday.
- Clean your baby's mouth daily.
- Brush your baby's teeth with a small amount of fluoride toothpaste.
- Give water only in bedtime bottles.
- Avoid giving your child food and drinks containing sugar. Children should not have fruit juice during their first year.

## Background Information for Trainer

Children should have their first dental visit before age one or when their first tooth appears in the mouth. This first dental visit is quick and fun and introduces the child to the dental team. Why so early? As soon as baby has teeth, he or she can get cavities.

The dentist will examine baby to make sure their jaws and teeth are developing like they should. The exam will likely happen with the child in their parent's lap. This is called a knee-to-knee exam. The parent will hold baby and lean them back onto the dentist's lap so they can look in baby's mouth. The dentist will count baby's teeth and check for white or dark spots which may be signs of tooth decay. Fluoride varnish may be applied to prevent cavities. If baby cries a little or wiggles during the exam, it's okay. It's normal, and the dentist understands this is a new experience for baby!



During the first dental visit, the dentist educates parents on how to take care of their child's teeth. This may include how to brush baby's teeth, the use of fluoride, and healthy habits. The dentist will advise parents on the need for fluoride.

Parents and other caregivers can and should ask questions. A baby's first visit to the dentist sets the stage for lifelong good oral health. That is why it is important "to get it done by age one." Being proactive about a child's dental health today can help keep their smile healthy for life.

## Tips for a great visit

- Help get your child ready for the visit by talking to them about what is going to happen. Reading books or watching videos may help your child be less fearful and more confident.
- Don't schedule an appointment during naptime. Instead, pick a time your child is usually well-rested and cooperative.
- Make sure your child has had a light meal before their appointment, so they won't be hungry during their visit. Brush their teeth after they eat.
- Save snacks for after the visit so they aren't on your child's teeth during the exam.
- Think of the appointment as a happy and fun experience. If your child becomes upset during the visit, work with your dentist to calm your child.

Texas Health Steps (Medicaid Program) and Texas CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Plan) cover dental visits for children starting at six months of age. Call 2-1-1 for information on finding a dentist.

## Materials/Supplies for the Lesson Plan

### Videos:

- English - [Baby Steps for Tiny Teeth](#) (length 6:37)
- Spanish - [La Salud dental del bebé](#) (length 7:26)

### Handouts:

- Fast Facts: My Child's First Dental Visit (OHIP-046)
- Fast Facts: They're Not Just Baby Teeth (OHIP-041)

## Agenda for Lesson Plan

Explain to your audience that today's session is about baby's first visit to the dentist. You'll ask some questions first to get everyone thinking, then you'll show them a video. After the video everyone will discuss what they saw, and you'll ask a few review questions.

### 1. Trigger questions to spark curiosity:



What have you experienced when visiting a dentist?



What would you like your baby's experience to be?



How can you help your child have a good experience?



Why do you think we might be talking about taking a child to the dentist so early?

### 2. Watch the video.



### 3. Questions to ask after watching the video:

**What did you think about the video? Did anything surprise you about it?**

*Answers you may hear: what it was like seeing a baby getting an exam, the types of things the dentist was talking about, the things the mom was telling her friend about, etc.*

**When should you take your child for their first dental visit? Why that age?**

*Answer: After the first tooth appears, but no later than their first birthday or by one-year of age. It is important to catch small problems early, before they become bigger.*

**How often should you clean your child's mouth?**

*Answer: Whether you breast or bottle feed, wipe your baby's gums after each feeding and before bedtime.*

**Should you use fluoride toothpaste? How much?**

*Answer: Brush twice a day using a small smear of toothpaste containing fluoride. This amount is about the size of a grain of rice.*

**Is fruit juice good for your child?**

*Answer: No, avoid giving your child foods and drinks containing sugar. Children should not have fruit juice during their first year.*

### 4. Share and review Fast Facts handouts.

### 5. Final questions:

**How can you find a dentist?**

*Answer: For help finding a dentist, call the 2-1-1 information and referral line. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can also ask your prenatal doctor for help with a referral to a dentist.*

**How do you schedule an appointment with a dentist?**

*Answer: The 2-1-1 Help Line can assist you with scheduling an appointment.*

Some helpful reminders:

- **Have your work schedule in front of you.**
- **Have your insurance card handy.**
- **Tell them you want to schedule a new patient appointment.**
- **Let them know if your child is having mouth pain.**
- **Ask for help in finding a ride to the appointment if needed.**

Additional Resources:

- [American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry](#)
- [American Dental Association](#)
- [Resources for Parents and Caregivers](#)
- [Oral Health Improvement Program](#)