

## Going to the Dentist

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Head Start requires that your enrolled Head Start child receive a dental exam. You may schedule this with a dentist of your choice in the area you live in. Please schedule this to be completed ASAP and let Lori know at 1-800-568-5942 when that appointment has been scheduled so the appropriate form may be mailed to the provider. You must bring with your dental insurance, medical assistance, Health Steps or Caring Program medical cards. Head Start cannot be billed for dental services if you have other appropriate insurance.

### What Happens at the Dentist's Office?

After your name is called in the waiting room, you'll go into an exam room and sit down in a big, comfortable chair that is like a huge recliner. The chair will have a place to rest your head and lots of room for you to stretch out your legs. Next to the chair may be a little sink with a cup that you can use to rinse out your mouth as your teeth are being cleaned.

During the exam, your teeth will be cleaned, flossed, and checked for cavities. Here's what will happen:

#### 1. Cleaning and Flossing

One of the first people you'll meet at the dentist's office is the dental hygienist (say: hi-gee-nist). The dental hygienist will look inside your mouth to make sure your teeth are growing properly and your gums are healthy. A bright, overhead light will shine down into your mouth like a giant flashlight so the dental hygienist can get a good look at your teeth and gums.

The dental hygienist will clean and polish your teeth, using tiny dental tools like a tooth scraper, mirror, and special toothbrush. Next comes brushing and flossing. The dental hygienist will brush your teeth with a special toothbrush and toothpaste. The toothbrush has a small, round tip that moves around and around to clean your teeth.

Then the dental hygienist will floss your teeth and show you the proper way to brush and floss your teeth at home.

Flossing involves using a piece of waxy string called dental floss to get in between your teeth and remove food particles that your brush can't reach.

#### 2. Checking for Cavities

During your visit, the dental hygienist will take X-rays, or pictures, of your teeth. X-rays are like super-human vision. They

show any cavities hiding between your teeth and any problems beneath your gums. A cavity is a decayed, or rotted, part of a tooth. It does not hurt to get an X-ray. It only takes a few seconds to take X-rays. The dental hygienist will place a thick blanket over your chest (to protect your body from the high-energy waves) and put a piece of plastic (that holds the X-ray film) into your mouth. As you gently bite down on the plastic, you'll have to be very still for a few seconds while the dental hygienist snaps the picture.

#### 3. Fluoride Treatments

Fluoride is a natural mineral that makes your teeth strong and helps prevent cavities. At the dentist's office, a fluoride gel or foam will be applied to your teeth. Most dental offices offer fluoride treatments with tasty flavors, like bubble gum or grape. The fluoride treatment will take about 1 to 4 minutes. The dental hygienist will probably tell you not to eat or drink anything (including water) for 30 minutes after the fluoride treatment.

#### 4. Meeting the Dentist

The dentist will look at all of your teeth and check your gums to make sure they're strong and healthy.