

GOING TO THE DENTIST



PREPARE FOR YOUR CHILD'S FIRST VISIT TO THE DENTIST

- Just as with any new experience, it's helpful to prepare children for what to expect when they visit the dentist.
- Keep your explanations simple. Choose your words carefully. Some adults may have mixed feelings about their own experiences with the dentist so it's important to be calm and confident about both the dentist and hygienist.
- If possible, arrange the appointment at a time of day that is best for your child. For many children, a morning appointment is best when children tend to be well rested, more cooperative, and not hungry.
- If you think your child may be especially upset during a visit to the dentist, it's good to call the dentist or hygienist and talk about it beforehand. They like to be told if there are special concerns.
- It will be helpful for your child to hear ahead of time about the things they'll see in the dentist's office: the bright lights, the chair that moves up and down, the tray of sharp-looking instruments, and little hoses that squirt water or air.
- Some children might like to wear sunglasses during their dental visit. Using them diffuses the brightness of the examination light. Ask your dentist's advice before your child's visit so you can be prepared and bring sunglasses from home if you think they'd be helpful for your child.
- Children trust us more and more each time they learn that the things we tell them are true.
- Sing the Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood strategy song: "When we do something new, let's talk about what we'll do."
- Pretend play always offers a child a way to gain mastery over concerns. Daniel Visits the Dentist episode shows children and adults some examples of pretend play.
- Select and read a few children's books about visiting the dentist before your child's first visit. Leave the books where your child can easily explore the pictures.

WHILE AT THE OFFICE

- While in the waiting room, you might want to play a simple game with your child. You can ask him or her to look for familiar things or special objects and shapes in the waiting room.
- Throughout the visit, be friendly with the staff and stay close by your child for emotional support.



WHY YOUR CHILD MIGHT BE FRIGHTENED OR FUSSY

- It's not surprising that children may have concerns about a visit to the dentist. They may struggle to understand why someone is looking into their mouths or using unfamiliar dental tools.
- Some children may struggle with their natural urge to bite, and a dental exam may test their self-control. They know they shouldn't bite, but they're not sure that they can control that feeling.
- Biting is a way that some young children have of expressing that they are angry. It may be the only way until they're able to use words to express themselves.
- It can be helpful to remember that one of the first ways that children learn about things is through their mouths. It's a part of how they process the world around them. Then, as children grow, they understand that we use our mouths for eating, talking, and expressing feelings, and that all of those actions allow us to be in control of ourselves.



AFTER VISITING THE DENTIST

- It's important to follow the guidelines from your dentist about how to care for teeth at home!
- Your child may have questions after his or her check-up, and your reassuring answers will help to prepare for the next visit.

Explore the PBS KIDS for Parents site for lots of information about Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood, including episode summaries, learning goals, and more at pbs.org/parents/daniel



Find Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood games and activities at pbskids.org/daniel