



FAQs on Dental Visits for Children with Developmental Needs

Establishing a good oral care routine early should include attending regular dental check-ups.

Children should have their first dental visit by 1-year-old or when the first tooth erupts, whichever comes first.

1. What are some important things I should know about dental visits for children with developmental needs?

A dental visit involves examination of the mouth and teeth and may include dental treatment as required (e.g. teeth cleaning, fillings). Children with developmental conditions may have different needs from typically developing children. They may find it challenging to cope with dental visits for the following reasons:

- Visit to the dentist may cause anxiety for some children as it is a new experience to them.
- Children with oral hypersensitivity may dislike the sensation of the toothbrush, dental instruments, or taste/texture of toothpaste in the mouth.
- Children with motor difficulties may have problems with spitting and gargling.
- Some may be sensitive to sounds, smells or bright lights at the clinic and struggle to cooperate in a new environment.
- It may be difficult to find a dentist who is experienced in treating children with developmental needs.

2. How do early dental visits help children with developmental needs?

Not all children with developmental needs can be cooperative well for dental treatment if some are needed. In these cases, sedation or even general anaesthesia may be needed to carry out the relevant dental treatment, which adds additional medical risks and costs.

Establishing an oral care routine can help a child in getting accustomed to the routines of dental care sooner and thus, preparing him/her to be able to cooperate for dental treatment if needed. In addition, with early and consistent dental care, dental problems such as toothache, infections or early loss of teeth can be prevented.

3. How can we prepare your child for a dental visit?

Should your child require a dental visit, your child can be referred to dentists who have experience treating children with developmental needs.

- If deemed suitable, occupational therapists can also work with your child on behavioural techniques and tools to familiarise him/her with oral care before their dental visit.
- Strategies used to help your child prepare for dental visits include role play with dolls, pre-visit preparations and repeat visits to familiarise them with the dental environment.

4. What can I expect at my child's dental visit?

- Most children with developmental needs feel anxious during dental visits. Some crying and/or struggling is to be expected. Your child may need extra time or support to get used to seeing a dentist.
- The dentist will enquire about your child's dental habits, diet and behaviour needs (e.g. likes and dislikes). You may need to help the dentist to gently restrain your child for a quick dental examination.
- Do inform your child about the dental visit beforehand. Be positive and tell your child in simple terms that the dentist will be counting their teeth.
- You can help prepare your child for the visit by reading them storybooks about going to the dentist, and practise counting your child's teeth during their brushing routine.
- Please bring along your child's toothbrush and toothpaste, any comfort items and communication devices that you feel may help them cope with the dental appointment.

5. Useful Links

- **Healthy Smiles Start Early (National University Centre for Oral Health Singapore, NUCOHS)**
https://www.nucohs.com.sg/docs/nucohslibraries/brochures-document/nucohs_health-smiles-start-early-brochure.pdf?sfvrsn=2dea28d1_1
- **Help Your Child Smile for Life - HealthHub**
<https://www.healthhub.sg/live-healthy/1272/growing-kid-help-your-child-smile-for-life>
- **International Association of Paediatric Dentistry**
<https://iapdworld.org/parents/>

National University Centre for Oral Health, Singapore

The National University Centre for Oral Health, Singapore (NUCOHS) is a national specialty centre that provides a comprehensive spectrum of dental care to manage oral, dental, and jaw-related conditions in patients across the lifespan. NUCOHS is also well poised to provide oral healthcare to the geriatric population as well as patients with special needs including those with complex medical conditions.

NUCOHS draws on the expertise of its clinicians and experts in the fields of Endodontics, Oral Maxillofacial Surgery, Orthodontics, Periodontics, Paediatric Dentistry and Prosthodontics, Geriatric Dentistry and Dental Public Health from the National University Hospital's (NUH) University Dental Cluster (UDC) and the National University of Singapore (NUS) Faculty of Dentistry to operate within NUHS under an academic health centre governance model. Its vision is to transform oral health in Singapore, nurture the next generation of oral health professionals, and champion impactful multi-disciplinary research in oral health.

NUCOHS is one of the three national centres, along with the National University Cancer Institute, Singapore (NCIS) and the National University Heart Centre, Singapore (NUHCS), which form an integral part of the National University Health System (NUHS) in meeting the evolving specialised healthcare needs of the population in Singapore.

For more information, please visit: www.nucohs.com.sg

NUH Child Development Unit

NUH Child Development Unit is part of the Khoo Teck Puat – National University Children's Medical Institute at National University Hospital. The clinic provides multidisciplinary assessments, therapy and holistic management of children with developmental & behavioural disorders from birth to 7 years old. Please make an appointment if you would like to see our paediatricians.

Notes:

National University Hospital

5 Lower Kent Ridge Road, Singapore 119074

OneNUHS Hotline: (65) 6908 2222

OneNUHS General Enquiries: contactus@nuhs.edu.sg

OneNUHS Appointments: appointment@nuhs.edu.sg

www.nuh.com.sg

The information in this brochure is meant for educational purposes and should not be used as a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. Please seek your doctor's advice before starting any treatment, or if you have any questions related to your health, physical fitness or medical condition.

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