

Make sure you have your child scheduled for their six month checkup...

Back to school!

by Dr. Brad Edgren

Everyone is shopping for school supplies, new clothes and getting sports physicals for the upcoming school year. However, its just as important to remember your child's dental needs at this time of year as well. Because it is a busy time of year, dental care often becomes overlooked, passed over and therefore forgotten.

Make sure you have your child scheduled for their six month cleaning and checkup. Why? Because many dental problems go unnoticed until they become a real problem when they could have been easily address at an earlier period.

Poor dental care and oral hygiene left unchecked leads to inflamed and bleeding gums known as gingivitis, decalcification and dental decay. Dental decay, also known as cavities, often goes unnoticed because the process of developing a cavity is painless until it reaches the pulp of a tooth. Once it finally reaches the pulp, the cavity can become very painful, often keeping the patient awake at night.

Small cavities can be easily treated when detected early at a semi-yearly exam and cleaning. When a cavity becomes large, the treatment to fill the defect becomes more complicated. If the pulp of a tooth is involved, root canal therapy or even extraction of the tooth is often recommended. This becomes extremely important when addressing permanent teeth because the lack of proper dental care in childhood can become a life long problem. A child's first permanent tooth, the first molar, typically erupts around at age six. Poor oral hygiene in these young children can lead to significant cavities in these permanent teeth requiring fillings for a lifetime.

Loss of baby teeth where the permanent tooth has not replaced the baby tooth in within six months is another common problem that can go unnoticed without a professional evalua-



tion. It is often a sign of significant crowding of permanent teeth in patients as young as seven. Early interceptive orthodontic treatment can prevent many future dental problems with timely recognition, before the crowding problem becomes worse. Without treatment, significant dental crowding of adult teeth can lead to permanent, irreversible damage to adjacent permanent teeth and their roots leading to potential tooth loss; again producing dental problems into adulthood.

It may be back to school season, but don't forget to get back to the dentist for an exam and cleaning. **G**

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