FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT PAEDIATRIC DENTISTRY

1. At what age can I bring my child to the dentist for his first dental check-up?
Dental care and dental hygiene should start as early as possible. It is better to start dental consultation at an early age like when your child’s first tooth appears or no later than his/her first birthday. This is the recommended time. However, it is best to bring your child once he/she has an understanding of basic oral hygiene and is able to interact with the dentist. As the dentist gets to engage with the child at an earlier age, the child can familiarise his or herself with the dental clinic setup and the dentist. This will also help them overcome their fear of the dentist or dental treatment at an early age.

2. At what age should my child’s teeth appear?
Baby or milk teeth usually start to appear when your child is around 6 months old. The first tooth to appear is the lower incisor. All 20 baby teeth should appear by the age of 2.
3. **What causes tooth decay in children?**
   The sugar content in milk is one of the main causes of tooth decay. When the milk bottle is left overnight the deposits of milk that stay on the teeth cause dental caries. Hence it is advisable to ween your child of the bottle sucking habits at an earlier age. Also once your child has had milk or other sugary fluids/food please help them to brush their teeth or rinse their mouth with water.

4. **How should I clean my child’s teeth?**
   A toothbrush will remove plaque bacteria that can lead to decay. Any soft-bristled toothbrush with a small head, preferably one designed specifically for infants, should be used at least once a day at bedtime.

5. **Should I use fluoride toothpaste for my child?**
   You may use a tiny smear of fluoride toothpaste to brush baby teeth twice daily as soon as they erupt and a soft small sized toothbrush. Once your child is 3 to 6 years old the amount should be increased to a pea-size amount and assist your child’s tooth brushing. Young children do not have the ability to brush their teeth effectively. Make sure child spits out and not swallow excess toothpaste after brushing.

6. **My child has a tooth ache, what should I do?**
   It is best to seek immediate consultation from the dentist right away.

7. **Is thumb sucking and pacifier habits harmful for my child’s teeth?**
   Thumb and pacifier sucking habits will generally only become a problem if they go on for a very long period of time. Most children stop these habits on their own, but if they are still sucking their thumbs or fingers past the age of three the parents must put a stop to it right away.

8. **How can I protect my child’s teeth from sport injuries?**
   Injury to the teeth by contact sports like football, rugby, basketball etc. are very common. If your child is active in these sports it is advisable to get a mouth guard for your child to protect his/her teeth.

9. **My child’s tooth is shaky. Should I extract it?**
   Depending on the situation the dentist will be able to tell if the shaky tooth needs to be extracted or not. A consultation is therefore necessary.
10. There’s a decay/caries on my child’s milk tooth. Do I need to fix it or leave as it will eventually fall out?

Decay/caries should be fixed or restored to prevent early tooth loss. Early tooth loss will lead to eruption of permanent crooked teeth which will require expensive orthodontic treatment to correct.

11. My paediatric dentist recommends a stainless steel crown. Does my child really need a crown?

A stainless steel crown is fixed for badly broken teeth that cannot be saved by a normal filling. Dentists usually fight hard to preserve teeth, especially in young children. To prevent early tooth loss in extensive decayed teeth, a stainless steel crown is the best option. A stainless crown is usually placed at the age of 6 and the permanent back teeth only appear at the age of 10.

12. How can I prevent decay in my child’s 1st permanent molar at the age of 6 years?

A fissure sealant is placed on the grooves and fissures of the newly erupted molars to protect them for caries or decay.