

the tendency toward being overweight. This is especially true in large urban centers during the winter months where there may not be adequate “safe” play and physical exercise space. With increasing numbers of young children being cared for outside the home, attention to the kinds of activity provided is important. For example, children with high activity levels may benefit from an environment that encourages vigorous play whether outside or in a large indoor play area.

Dental Health

Regular Dental Examinations

The [American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry \(2014a\)](#) recommends that every child have an oral health examination by a practitioner by 6 months old; if the child is in a high-risk category for caries, it is recommended that an initial visit to a dentist or pedodontist (pediatric dentist) occur by 6 months old or within 6 months of the eruption of the first tooth. Every child should have an established dental home by 12 months old ([American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, 2014a](#)). Initial visits to the dentist should be nontraumatizing. Because toddlers react negatively to new and potentially frightening experiences, the initial visit can center around meeting the dentist, seeing the equipment, and sitting in the chair. If the child is cooperative, the dentist may just look at the teeth but reserve a more thorough examination for another visit. Modeling, in which the child observes procedures performed on the parent or a cooperative sibling, can also be effective but may not work on all toddlers.

Plaque Removal

Oral hygiene measures should be implemented in toddlers to remove plaque, soft bacterial deposits that adhere to the teeth and cause dental caries (decay or cavities) and periodontal (gum) disease. Poor oral hygiene and poor dietary habits are associated with the development of caries in children.

The most effective methods for plaque removal are brushing and flossing. Several brushing techniques exist, although there is no universal agreement regarding the best method. One that is suitable for cleaning the primary teeth is the scrub method. The tips of the