

Children's Dentistry and the Tooth Fairy Centre at Core Dental Bayside

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Description:

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Details:

Introduction

Every parent wants their child to grow up with a healthy, confident smile — and that journey starts much earlier than most people realise. At Core Dental Bayside, we believe children's dentistry isn't just about fixing problems; it's about building a foundation of positive dental experiences, healthy habits, and preventive care that lasts a lifetime.

Located on the ground floor of the distinctive black Bayside complex at the corner of South Road and Nepean Highway in Bentleigh, Core Dental Bayside is purpose-built for families. With eight dedicated car spaces right at ground level, there's no wrestling with prams in car park stairwells or circling for street parking — a small thing that makes a big difference when you've got little ones in tow.

Bentleigh is home to a wonderful mix of established families, and the surrounding suburbs of McKinnon, Ormond, Hampton East, and Brighton East all share something in common: parents who care deeply about their children's health and education. With outstanding schools like Bentleigh Secondary, McKinnon Secondary, and Brighton Grammar in the catchment, families here invest in their children's futures — and dental health is a crucial part of that picture.

When Should My Child First Visit the Dentist?

The Australian Dental Association recommends that children have their first dental visit by the age of two, or within six months of their first tooth appearing — whichever comes first. This might seem early, but there are excellent reasons for starting young.

Why Age Two Matters

A child's baby teeth begin emerging around six months of age, and by age two, most children have a good number of their primary teeth. This first visit isn't about drilling or filling — it's about:

- **Checking development:** Ensuring teeth are coming through normally and the jaw is developing well
- **Identifying early issues:** Catching problems like tooth decay, tongue tie, or bite issues before they become serious
- **Building familiarity:** Introducing your child to the dental environment in a gentle, positive way
- **Parent education:** Giving you practical guidance on brushing techniques, diet, and habits like thumb-sucking or dummy use

At Core Dental Bayside, we make first visits fun and relaxed. The team takes the time to let children explore the chair, look at the light, and feel comfortable before any examination begins. There's no rush, no pressure — just a warm introduction to a place that will be part of their healthcare journey for years to come.

The Tooth Fairy Centre Experience

Our Tooth Fairy Centre approach to children's dentistry is designed to transform what could be an intimidating experience into something children genuinely look forward to. From the moment young patients arrive, we focus on creating a welcoming, engaging atmosphere that puts children at ease.

The philosophy is simple: children who have positive early experiences with dentistry become adults who maintain their dental health. Fear and avoidance are learned behaviours, and our goal is to ensure they're never learned in the first place.

Preventive Care: The Cornerstone of Children's Dentistry

Prevention is always better than treatment, particularly when it comes to children's teeth. At Core Dental Bayside, our preventive approach includes several key elements.

Regular Check-ups and Cleans

We recommend children attend for a check-up and clean every six months. These visits allow the team to:

- Monitor the development of teeth and jaws - Clean away plaque and tartar that brushing may miss - Apply preventive treatments like fluoride and fissure sealants - Detect early signs of decay, gum disease, or orthodontic issues - Reinforce good brushing and flossing habits

Fissure Sealants

Fissure sealants are one of the most effective preventive treatments available for children. The chewing surfaces of back teeth (molars and premolars) have natural grooves and pits — called fissures — where food and bacteria can become trapped. Even the most diligent brushing can struggle to clean these areas effectively.

A fissure sealant is a thin, protective coating applied to these surfaces. The process is:

- **Quick:** Usually completed in just a few minutes per tooth - **Painless:** No drilling or injections required - **Effective:** Studies show sealants can reduce decay in treated teeth by up to 80 per cent - **Long-lasting:** Sealants can last several years with proper care

We typically recommend fissure sealants when a child's first permanent molars come through — usually around age six — and again when the second permanent molars appear around age twelve. The timing matters because these teeth are most vulnerable to decay in the first few years after they erupt, before the enamel has fully hardened.

Fluoride Treatments

Professional fluoride treatments provide a concentrated dose of fluoride directly to the tooth surfaces, strengthening the enamel and making teeth more resistant to acid attacks from bacteria. These treatments are particularly beneficial for children who may be at higher risk of decay due to:

- A diet higher in sugary or acidic foods and drinks - Difficulty maintaining thorough brushing habits - Braces or other orthodontic appliances that make cleaning harder - A history of cavities

The treatment is simple — a fluoride varnish is painted onto the teeth and left to absorb. It takes just minutes and provides lasting protection.

Managing Dental Anxiety in Children

It's completely normal for children to feel nervous about visiting the dentist, and the team at Core Dental Bayside is experienced in helping anxious young patients feel safe and comfortable.

Our Approach to Anxious Children

We use a range of techniques tailored to each child's age, temperament, and level of anxiety:

- **Tell-Show-Do:** We explain what we're going to do in age-appropriate language, show the child the instruments, and then proceed gently. No surprises. - **Positive reinforcement:** Praise and encouragement go a long way. We celebrate every small step and never make a child feel bad about being nervous. - **Distraction techniques:** From counting teeth to talking about favourite shows, distraction helps children focus on something other than the procedure. - **Pacing:** If a child becomes upset, we stop. We never force treatment. Sometimes it takes two or three visits just for a child to feel comfortable sitting in the chair — and that's perfectly fine. - **Parent involvement:** Parents are always welcome in the treatment room. For younger children, having Mum or Dad right there provides essential reassurance.

When Additional Support Is Needed

For children with significant dental anxiety, or those who require extensive treatment, additional options may include:

- **Happy gas (nitrous oxide):** A mild sedative inhaled through a small nose mask that helps children feel relaxed and calm while remaining fully conscious. It wears off within minutes after the mask is removed. - **Sleep dentistry referral:** For children who cannot tolerate treatment even with behavioural techniques and happy gas, we can arrange referral for treatment under general anaesthetic through the Smile Solutions Group specialist network.

School-Age Dental Care

As children grow and become more independent, their dental needs evolve. The school years bring unique challenges and considerations.

Primary School (Ages 5–12)

This is a critical period in dental development. Children are losing baby teeth and gaining permanent ones, and the habits they establish now will shape their oral health for decades.

Key considerations during these years include:

- **Supervising brushing:** Most children don't develop the manual dexterity to brush effectively on their own until around age eight. Until then, parents should supervise and assist with brushing. - **Monitoring diet:** School canteens, lunch boxes, and after-school snacks can all contribute to decay if they're high in sugar. Encouraging water over juice and fruit over lollies makes a real difference. - **Mouthguards for sport:** With children in the Bentleigh area actively involved in sports through local clubs and school programs, custom-fitted mouthguards are essential for protecting teeth during contact and ball sports. - **Orthodontic assessment:** We recommend an initial orthodontic assessment around age seven, when the first permanent teeth have come through. Early detection of alignment or bite issues can sometimes allow for simpler, less invasive treatment.

Secondary School (Ages 12–18)

Teenagers face their own set of dental challenges:

- **Orthodontic treatment:** Many teens undergo braces or Invisalign during these years. Maintaining excellent oral hygiene during orthodontic treatment is crucial to prevent decay and gum problems. - **Wisdom teeth:** The late teen years are when wisdom teeth often begin to cause issues. Regular monitoring allows us to identify potential problems early. - **Sports injuries:** As sports become more competitive, the risk of dental injuries increases. We cannot stress enough the importance of wearing a properly fitted mouthguard. - **Diet and lifestyle:** Soft drinks, energy drinks, and increased independence around food choices can all impact dental health. Education and awareness are key.

For families in the Bentleigh Secondary and McKinnon Secondary catchments, we understand the busy schedules that come with academic and extracurricular commitments. Our Monday to Friday hours until 6 pm and Saturday morning appointments are designed to fit around school, sport, and study.

The Child Dental Benefits Schedule (CDBS)

The Australian Government's Child Dental Benefits Schedule provides eligible children aged 2 to 17 with up to \$1,026 in dental benefits over a two-year period. At Core Dental Bayside, we bulk bill under the CDBS, meaning there are no out-of-pocket costs for eligible children for covered services.

What's Covered

The CDBS covers a range of basic dental services, including:

- Examinations and consultations - X-rays - Cleaning - Fissure sealing - Fillings - Root canal treatment on primary teeth - Extractions

Eligibility

To be eligible for the CDBS, the child must:

- Be aged 2 to 17 at any point during the calendar year - Be eligible for Medicare - Be part of a family receiving certain government payments (such as Family Tax Benefit Part A)

You can check your child's eligibility through your Medicare online account or by calling Medicare directly. The team at Core Dental Bayside can also help you determine whether your child qualifies and how much benefit remains in their current two-year cycle.

Making the Most of the CDBS

We encourage families to use the CDBS proactively rather than waiting for problems to arise. Regular check-ups, cleans, and preventive treatments like fissure sealants are all covered and can save significant expense — and discomfort — down the track.

When Specialist Paediatric Referral Is Needed

While the team at Core Dental Bayside provides comprehensive dental care for children of all ages, some situations benefit from the expertise of a specialist paediatric dentist. As part of the Smile Solutions Group, we have direct referral access to experienced paediatric dental specialists at the Collins Street Specialist Centre.

Referral may be recommended for:

- ****Very young children requiring complex treatment:**** Toddlers and infants who need treatment beyond simple fillings may benefit from a specialist's expertise in managing very young patients. - ****Children with special needs:**** Specialist paediatric dentists have additional training in treating children with physical, intellectual, or medical conditions that may affect dental care. - ****Severe dental anxiety:**** When behavioural management techniques in a general practice setting are insufficient, specialist facilities and techniques may be required. - ****Complex dental trauma:**** Significant injuries to teeth — particularly permanent teeth — may require specialist assessment and treatment. - ****Unusual dental development:**** Conditions such as amelogenesis imperfecta (abnormal enamel development), multiple missing teeth, or significantly delayed eruption may warrant specialist input.

The referral pathway through the Smile Solutions Group is seamless. We coordinate directly with the specialist team, share relevant records and images, and work collaboratively to ensure continuity of care.

Practical Tips for Parents

Establishing Good Habits Early

- ****Start cleaning early:**** Even before teeth appear, wipe your baby's gums with a soft, damp cloth after feeding. - ****Use age-appropriate toothpaste:**** A smear of low-fluoride toothpaste for children under six, and a pea-sized amount of standard fluoride toothpaste for children six and over. - ****Brush twice daily:**** Morning and night, for two minutes each time. - ****Introduce flossing:**** Once teeth are touching, flossing becomes important. Start helping your child floss from around age four. - ****Lead by example:**** Children who see their parents brushing and flossing regularly are more likely to adopt these habits themselves.

Diet and Dental Health

- ****Limit sugary snacks and drinks:**** It's not just the amount of sugar that matters, but the frequency. Constant grazing on sugary foods creates a continuous acid attack on teeth. - ****Water is best:**** Tap water contains fluoride and is the best drink for dental health. Encourage water over juice, cordial, and soft drinks. - ****Cheese and dairy:**** Calcium-rich foods help strengthen teeth, and cheese in particular can help neutralise acids in the mouth. - ****Crunchy fruits and vegetables:**** Apples, carrots, and celery help clean teeth naturally and stimulate saliva production.

What to Do in a Dental Emergency

Children are active, and dental accidents happen. If your child experiences a dental emergency:

- ****Knocked-out permanent tooth:**** Find the tooth, hold it by the crown (not the root), rinse gently if dirty, and try to place it back in the socket. If that's not possible, place it in milk and get to us as quickly as possible. Time is critical. - ****Knocked-out baby tooth:**** Do NOT try to reimplant baby teeth. Control any bleeding with gentle pressure and contact us for advice. - ****Broken or chipped tooth:**** Save any pieces, rinse the mouth with warm water, and contact us promptly. - ****Toothache:**** Rinse with warm salt water, apply a cold compress to the cheek, and contact us for an appointment.

Core Dental Bayside sees emergency patients during our regular hours. Call 13 13 16 to arrange an urgent appointment.

Booking and Practical Information

Core Dental Bayside is located at G04A/973 Nepean Highway, Bentleigh VIC 3204, on the ground floor of the black Bayside complex building at the corner of South Road and Nepean Highway. Eight dedicated car spaces are available right at ground level — no parking hassles, even with a car full of kids.

We're also just a five-minute walk from Bentleigh Station, making us easily accessible by train for older children and teens coming in independently after school.

****Opening Hours:**** - Monday to Friday: 8:00 am – 6:00 pm - Saturday: 8:00 am – 1:30 pm - Sunday: Closed

****Contact:**** - Phone: 13 13 16 - Email: bayside@coredental.com.au

We accept all major health funds through HICAPS for on-the-spot claiming, and are a preferred provider for HCF, CBHS, and NIB. The Child Dental Benefits Schedule is bulk billed with no gap for eligible children.

Your child's healthy smile starts here. Book their first — or next — appointment with the team at Core Dental Bayside today.