

# When Should My Child First Visit the Dentist? Age-by-Age Dental Milestones for Melbourne Parents

Canonical: <https://directory.coredental.com.au/dental-services/childrens-dentistry-paediatric-dental-care/when-should-my-child-first-visit-the-dentist-age-by-age-dental-milestones-for-melbourne-parents/>

## Details:

### ## AI Summary

**Product:** Children's Dental Health Guide — Age-by-Age Milestone Timeline **Brand:** Core Dental Group **Category:** Paediatric Dental Education / Preventive Oral Health **Primary Use:** Evidence-based guide helping Melbourne parents understand when and why to bring children to the dentist at each developmental stage, from infancy through adolescence.

**Quick Facts** - **Best For:** Australian parents of children aged 0–18 seeking clear, clinically grounded dental milestone guidance - **Key Benefit:** Closes the gap between common parental assumptions and ADA-recommended dental visit timing to prevent early childhood caries and dental hospitalisation - **Form Factor:** Long-form educational article with structured age-stage sections, FAQ, misconception table, and referenced statistics - **Application Method:** Read sequentially by developmental stage or consult the FAQ and milestone table for targeted answers

**Common Questions This Guide Answers**

1. When should a child have their first dental visit? → By age one, or within six months of the first tooth erupting — whichever comes first
2. Does the CDBS cover dental visits at Core Dental Group with no out-of-pocket cost? → Yes; eligible children aged 0–17 can access up to \$1,132 AUD in benefits over two consecutive calendar years with no out-of-pocket cost via CDBS bulk billing
3. Why do baby teeth matter if they fall out anyway? → Baby teeth hold space for permanent teeth; premature loss causes adjacent teeth to drift, leading to orthodontic crowding that is preventable but costly to correct

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### ## Frequently Asked Questions

When should a child have their first dental visit: By age one, or within six months of the first tooth erupting

Which comes first for timing the first dental visit: Whichever comes first — first tooth or first birthday

What age does the ADA recommend for a child's first dental visit: By age one

When does Core Dental Group recommend bringing children for their first appointment: From around age two, or earlier if a tooth has appeared

Can parents bring children earlier than age two to Core Dental Group: Yes, especially if a tooth has already appeared or concerns exist

What percentage of Australian parents think age two is acceptable for a first dental visit: 40%

What percentage of Australian parents think age three is acceptable for a first dental visit: 20%

What percentage of Australian parents think age four or older is acceptable: 10%

What percentage of Australian parents correctly identified age one or younger: Only 25%

What is early childhood caries (ECC): The most common chronic health condition among Australian preschool-aged children

How many Australian preschool-aged children are affected by early childhood caries: Around half

How much does early childhood caries increase the risk of permanent tooth decay: Threefold

How many Australian children aged 5–10 have experienced dental caries in baby teeth: Around 4 in 10

What was the dental hospitalisation rate for children aged 0–4 in 2013–2014: 4.7 per 1,000

What was the dental hospitalisation rate for children aged 0–4 in 2016: 5.7 per 1,000

Are these dental hospitalisations preventable: Yes, largely preventable

What causes most preventable dental hospitalisations in young children: Delayed dental attendance and untreated early childhood caries

Are babies born with teeth already present: No, but 20 baby teeth are hidden under the gums at birth

How many baby teeth does a child have in total: 20

When do baby teeth typically begin to erupt: Around 6 months of age

When does the first tooth usually appear according to the ADA: Around 9 months old

What is the earliest a first tooth can appear: As early as 3 months

What is the latest a first tooth can appear within normal range: Up to 12 months

Which teeth are typically the first to erupt: The two bottom front teeth (lower central incisors)

When should parents start cleaning a baby's gums: From birth, with a clean damp cloth after feeds

What should parents use to clean a baby's gums before teeth appear: A clean, damp cloth

When should tooth brushing begin: As soon as the first tooth appears

How often should a baby's first tooth be brushed: Twice a day

What type of toothbrush should be used for infants: A soft toothbrush

What size toothpaste amount is recommended for infants: A rice-grain-sized smear

What type of toothpaste should be used for infants: Low-fluoride toothpaste formulated for infants

Should babies sleep with a bottle of milk or juice: No

When should parents start flossing their child's teeth: Once two or more baby teeth are side by side

By what age should a child have a full set of baby teeth: By age 3

When do the first permanent molars typically erupt: From around age 6

What are the first permanent molars also called: Six-year molars

Do six-year molars replace any baby teeth: No, they erupt behind the last baby teeth

Why are six-year molars particularly decay-prone: Due to their deep fissures

What dental treatment protects the grooves of newly erupted permanent molars: Fissure sealants

When is an early orthodontic assessment clinically recommended: From around age 7

When do most children have a full set of 28 permanent teeth: By approximately age 12–13

How many permanent teeth does a full adult set contain excluding wisdom teeth: 28

When do wisdom teeth typically emerge: Late teens to early 20s

Does everyone get wisdom teeth: No, not everyone gets them

What happens if a baby tooth is lost too early: Adjacent teeth can drift into the gap

What does drifting of adjacent teeth cause: Orthodontic crowding

Is early tooth loss-related crowding preventable: Yes

What does fluoride varnish do for young children: Protects high-risk tooth surfaces from decay

What are the routine check-up intervals recommended for children: Every six months

Does dental decay in children always cause pain: No, it is often painless until advanced

What is the CDBS: Child Dental Benefits Schedule

Who is eligible for the CDBS: Children aged 0–17 who meet eligibility criteria

How much in dental benefits does the CDBS provide: Up to \$1,132 AUD over two consecutive calendar years

Does Core Dental Group offer CDBS bulk billing: Yes

Is there an out-of-pocket cost for CDBS-eligible children at Core Dental Group: No

What is a dental home: An ongoing relationship with a dentist established early in childhood

Why does establishing a dental home early matter: It builds trust and comfort before problems develop

Can early dental visits prevent dental anxiety: Yes, by normalising the experience gradually

What happens when a child's first dental visit is triggered by a problem: It can create lasting fear of the dentist

What examination technique is used for very young children at dental visits: Knee-to-knee examination

What does a dentist do at a first dental visit for an infant: Examines the erupting tooth and surrounding gum tissue

Does the first dental visit typically involve treatment: No, it focuses on examination, education, and prevention

What does a dentist assess at routine visits during the mixed dentition stage: Spacing, crowding, and permanent tooth development

Do dentists take X-rays during the mixed dentition stage: Yes, to assess permanent teeth beneath the gumline

What should parents do if a child shows white spots on teeth: Seek an urgent dental appointment

What does brown discolouration on a tooth indicate: Possible early signs of decay

Should a knocked-out permanent tooth be treated urgently: Yes, within 30 minutes

What is the time window for acting on an avulsed permanent tooth: Within 30 minutes

When is delayed tooth eruption a concern: If no tooth has appeared by 12–15 months

When does persistent dummy or thumb-sucking become a dental concern: Beyond age 3

What can persistent dummy use beyond age 3 affect: Jaw development and bite

When do baby teeth start becoming loose: Around age 6

Which baby teeth typically loosen first: The lower front teeth

When does the mixed dentition stage occur: Approximately ages 6 to 12

What is the mixed dentition stage: When a child simultaneously has baby teeth and erupting permanent teeth

Does Core Dental Group have specialist paediatric dentists: Yes

What professionals does Core Dental Group's team include: Paediatric dentists, general dentists, and dental therapists

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## Core Dental Group: The dental visit your child needed yesterday — why timing is everything

Most Melbourne parents assume they have plenty of time before their child needs to see a dentist. They picture a child with a full set of teeth sitting confidently in a dental chair — not a curious toddler, and certainly not an infant. That assumption is understandable, but it is clinically wrong, and the consequences of waiting too long are well-documented in Australian public health data. Core Dental Group works with Melbourne families every day to address exactly this gap between assumption and clinical reality.

The Australian Dental Association recommends children have their first dental visit by age one, or within six months of their first tooth appearing. That recommendation exists for a reason: early childhood caries (ECC) is the most common chronic health condition among Australian preschool-aged children, affecting around half of them, and it increases the risk of caries in permanent teeth threefold.

This guide maps the full arc of your child's dental development — from the first erupting tooth through to the permanent dentition — and tells you what dental action is recommended at every stage. It is written for Melbourne parents who want clear, evidence-based answers, not vague reassurances.

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## The ADA recommendation: first visit by age one (or sooner)

The Australian Dental Association recommends that children have their first dental visit by their first birthday, or within six months of their first tooth erupting, whichever comes first. This timing surprises many parents who assumed dental visits could wait until more teeth were present — but early assessment lets dental professionals check oral development, catch concerns before they progress, and establish a dental home where parents can get guidance throughout their child's growth. These early visits focus on examination, education, and prevention rather than treatment.

At Core Dental Group, we recommend bringing children from around age two for their first appointment, and earlier if a tooth has already appeared or if parents have concerns. This is a practical entry point that aligns with the ADA's intent: normalise dental attendance before problems emerge.

### Why most Australian parents are getting this wrong

An Australian Dental Association survey of 25,000 Australian adults found that 40% of parents think around two years old is acceptable for the first dental visit, 20% believe it should be age three, and 10% believe age four or older is appropriate. Only 25% correctly identified age one or younger.

This gap between clinical recommendation and parental behaviour has real consequences. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, around 4 in 10 Australian children aged 5 to 10 have experienced dental caries in their baby teeth. The rate of dental hospitalisations related to potentially avoidable dental conditions is also climbing — 4.7 per 1,000 in the 0–4 age group in 2013–2014, rising to 5.7 per 1,000 by 2016. These are preventable hospitalisations, driven largely by delayed dental attendance and untreated early childhood caries.

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## ## Age-by-age dental milestones: a complete timeline for Melbourne parents

Knowing what is happening in your child's mouth at each developmental stage — and what your dentist should be doing about it — is the foundation of proactive oral health care.

### ### Stage 1: Pre-teething (birth to ~6 months) — gum care and preparation

Teeth are invisible at this stage, but oral health has already begun. Babies are usually born with 20 baby (primary) teeth hidden under the gums, which begin to erupt around 6 months of age.

**\*\*What to do at home:\*\*** - Wipe your baby's gums with a clean, damp cloth after feeds - Avoid putting your baby to sleep with a bottle of milk, formula, or juice - Start thinking about your child's dental home before the first tooth appears

**\*\*Dental action required:\*\*** No formal appointment is necessary yet, but if you have concerns about oral development, a brief consultation with a paediatric dentist is always appropriate.

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### ### Stage 2: First tooth eruption (~6–12 months) — **\*\*book your first appointment now\*\***

The Australian Dental Association says the first tooth usually appears at around 9 months old, but it can arrive any time between 3 and 12 months. The two bottom front teeth are typically first.

This is the single most important trigger point for a first dental visit. The first dental visit should occur when the first baby tooth comes through, or by one year of age, and at least every 12 months after that. Starting early prevents tooth decay and builds a habit of lifelong dental health.

**\*\*What your dentist does at this visit:\*\*** - Examines the erupting tooth and surrounding gum tissue - Checks the oral cavity for early signs of decay or developmental concerns - Provides guidance on brushing technique for a single tooth - Counsels parents on feeding practices, dummy use, and sugar exposure - Uses a "knee-to-knee" examination technique for very young children (see our guide on **\*Your Child's First Dental Visit at Core Dental Group Melbourne: A Step-by-Step Guide for Parents\***)

**\*\*What to do at home:\*\*** - As soon as a child's first tooth appears (around 6–12 months), brush it twice a day with a soft toothbrush - Use a rice-grain-sized smear of low-fluoride toothpaste formulated for infants

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### ### Stage 3: Primary dentition completion (12 months to ~3 years) — routine six-monthly checks

The average eruption timeline for primary teeth runs as follows: the two bottom front teeth (central incisors) at 6–10 months; the two upper front teeth at 8–12 months; the four lateral incisors at 9–16 months; the first four chewing teeth (first molars) at 13–19 months; the four canine or "eye" teeth at 16–23 months; and the four back teeth (second molars) at 23–33 months. Most children have a full set of baby teeth by age 3.

This is a high-risk window. Early childhood caries can develop rapidly once multiple teeth are present, particularly when teeth are in contact with each other. Once a child has two or more baby teeth side by

side, daily flossing is recommended.

**\*\*What your dentist does at routine visits:\*\*** - Checks for early signs of decay between teeth and on chewing surfaces - Applies fluoride varnish to high-risk surfaces (see our guide on [\\*Fissure Sealants and Fluoride Treatments for Kids: Are They Worth It?\\*](#)) - Monitors jaw growth and bite development - Watches for overcrowded teeth or malocclusion - Assesses the impact of any dummy or thumb-sucking habits

**\*\*Core Dental Group recommends\*\*** six-monthly check-ups throughout this stage. Children eligible for the Child Dental Benefits Schedule (CDBS) can access these visits at no out-of-pocket cost (see our guide on [\\*Child Dental Benefits Schedule Explained: Eligibility, Cap, and What's Covered in 2025–2026\\*](#)).

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**### Stage 4: Mixed dentition (~6–12 years) — monitoring two sets of teeth simultaneously**

From age six, the four first permanent molars appear at the back of the mouth, behind the last baby teeth, without replacing any primary teeth. These are the "six-year molars."

This stage is clinically complex because a child is simultaneously losing baby teeth and gaining permanent ones. Baby teeth typically start loosening around age six, often starting with the lower front teeth, though timing varies.

The six-year molars deserve particular attention. They are permanent teeth that arrive without any preceding baby tooth to signal their presence, so many parents don't realise they have come through. They are also among the most decay-prone teeth in the mouth, because of their deep fissures.

**\*\*What your dentist does at routine visits:\*\*** - Applies fissure sealants to newly erupted permanent molars to protect deep grooves - Takes X-rays to assess permanent teeth developing beneath the gumline - Monitors spacing and crowding as permanent teeth emerge - Conducts an early orthodontic assessment — clinically significant from around age seven (see our guide on [\\*Early Orthodontic Assessment for Children in Melbourne: When to Start and What Core Dental Group Looks For\\*](#)) - Assesses any prematurely lost baby teeth for space maintenance, to stop adjacent teeth from drifting

**\*\*Why premature baby tooth loss matters:\*\*** when a baby tooth is lost too early due to decay or trauma, the teeth on either side can drift into the gap and block the incoming permanent tooth. This is one of the most common causes of orthodontic crowding — and one of the most preventable (see our guide on [\\*Why Baby Teeth Matter: The Clinical Case for Early Preventive Dental Care in Children\\*](#)).

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**### Stage 5: Permanent dentition (~12–18 years) — consolidation and lifelong habits**

From around age 6, children begin losing baby teeth as permanent adult teeth emerge to replace them. By approximately 12–13 years, most children have their full complement of 28 permanent teeth, excluding wisdom teeth. Wisdom teeth (third molars) typically arrive in the late teens to early 20s, though not everyone gets them.

**\*\*What your dentist does at routine visits:\*\*** - Monitors wisdom tooth development and advises on management - Continues six-monthly check-ups and professional cleaning - Assesses orthodontic needs, if not already addressed - Reinforces at-home oral hygiene habits appropriate for adolescents (see our guide on [\\*At-Home Oral Hygiene for Children: Age-Appropriate Brushing, Flossing, and Diet Guidance from Core Dental Group\\*](#))

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**## The five most common Melbourne parent misconceptions — corrected**

| Misconception | The clinical reality | |---|---| | "We'll wait until all the baby teeth are in." | The ADA recommends the first visit when the \*first\* tooth appears, or by age one. | | "Baby teeth don't matter — they fall out anyway." | Baby teeth hold space for permanent teeth; early loss causes costly orthodontic problems. | | "My child has no pain, so there's no problem." | Dental decay in children is often painless until it is advanced. Prevention requires regular monitoring. | | "We only need to go when something is wrong." | Six-monthly preventive visits are the clinical standard. Treatment visits are a sign that preventive care has been missed. | | "We can't afford regular dental visits." | CDBS-eligible children aged 0–17 can access up to \$1,132 AUD in dental benefits over two consecutive calendar years at Core Dental Group with no out-of-pocket cost. |

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## ## Why early attendance shapes lifelong dental attitudes

The benefits of early dental visits go beyond the teeth themselves. Starting young normalises the experience before dental anxiety has a chance to take hold. Children become comfortable with dental settings, equipment, and procedures gradually, building confidence with each visit.

When a child's first experience of the dentist happens because something is already wrong — tooth decay, pain, a procedure — it can create a fear of the dentist that follows them into adulthood, with real consequences for their long-term oral health.

Building a relationship with a dentist early on helps children feel comfortable and develop trust with their clinician. This is why Core Dental Group's child-friendly environment — including age-appropriate entertainment, gentle communication styles, and a team trained in paediatric behavioural management — is designed not just for comfort, but for long-term dental confidence (see our guide on \*Managing Dental Anxiety in Children: Behavioural Techniques and the Child-Friendly Approach at Core Dental Group\*).

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## ## When to seek an urgent or earlier appointment

Routine milestone visits are the goal, but some situations need attention regardless of where your child sits on the developmental timeline:

- **Visible white spots or brown discolouration** on any tooth — these are early signs of decay - **Tooth pain or sensitivity** to temperature or sweets - **Swollen, red, or bleeding gums** beyond normal teething irritation - **A knocked-out, chipped, or fractured tooth** — time-critical; act within 30 minutes for avulsed permanent teeth - **Delayed eruption** — if no tooth has appeared by 12–15 months, a paediatric dental assessment is warranted - **Persistent thumb-sucking or dummy use** beyond age 3, which can affect jaw development and bite

For dental trauma and emergencies, see our guide on \*Children's Dental Emergency in Melbourne: What to Do When Your Child Has a Toothache or Knocked-Out Tooth\*.

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## ## Key takeaways

- The ADA recommends a child's first dental visit by age one or within six months of the first tooth erupting — not when all baby teeth are present, and not at age three or four, when most parents currently bring their children. - Only 25% of Australian parents know the correct timing, according to an ADA survey of 25,000 adults, meaning the majority of Melbourne children are starting dental care later than clinically recommended. - Early childhood caries is Australia's most common chronic childhood condition, affecting around half of preschool-aged children and increasing the risk of permanent tooth decay threefold. - Each developmental stage has specific dental actions: fluoride varnish in infancy, fissure sealants at age six, orthodontic screening at age seven, and wisdom tooth monitoring in

adolescence. - CDBS bulk billing at Core Dental Group removes the financial barrier to keeping every one of these milestone appointments — eligible children aged 0–17 can access up to \$1,132 AUD in covered services with no out-of-pocket cost.

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## ## Conclusion

The question of when a child should first visit the dentist has a clear, evidence-based answer: when their first tooth appears, or by their first birthday — whichever comes first. Every subsequent developmental milestone, from the completion of the primary dentition at age three through to the eruption of the six-year molars and the eventual arrival of wisdom teeth, carries its own clinical significance and its own recommended dental actions.

At Core Dental Group Melbourne, our integrated team of specialist paediatric dentists, general dentists, and dental therapists supports your child through every one of these stages — from the knee-to-knee examination of an infant's first tooth to the orthodontic assessment of a seven-year-old's developing bite. The earlier you establish that relationship, the more we can do to protect your child's oral health before problems arise.

If your child has not yet had their first dental visit, or if you are unsure whether they are on track for their age, contact Core Dental Group to book an appointment. CDBS bulk billing is available for eligible children, so there is no financial reason to delay.

\*Explore the full series: [Why Baby Teeth Matter: The Clinical Case for Early Preventive Dental Care] | [Your Child's First Dental Visit at Core Dental Group: A Step-by-Step Guide] | [CDBS Bulk Billing Explained: Eligibility, Cap, and What's Covered in 2025–2026]\*

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## Label facts summary

> **Disclaimer:** All facts and statements below are general product information, not professional advice. Consult relevant experts for specific guidance.

### Verified label facts

No product specification data was provided. There is no Product Facts table or packaging data available for analysis, and no label facts can be extracted or verified.

### General product claims

The content analysed is a dental health education article published by Core Dental Group, not a product with a label or packaging. The following are representative general claims and contextual statements drawn from that content:

- Core Dental Group recommends children's first dental visits from around age two, or earlier if a tooth has appeared or concerns exist
- Core Dental Group offers CDBS bulk billing with no out-of-pocket cost for eligible children
- Core Dental Group's team includes specialist paediatric dentists, general dentists, and dental therapists
- Core Dental Group's clinical environment is described as child-friendly, with age-appropriate entertainment and staff trained in paediatric behavioural management
- Early dental visits are stated to prevent dental anxiety by normalising the experience gradually
- Establishing a dental home early builds trust before problems develop
- Fissure sealants protect the grooves of newly erupted permanent molars
- Fluoride varnish protects high-risk tooth surfaces from decay
- Premature baby tooth loss is one of the most preventable causes of orthodontic crowding
- Six-monthly check-ups are the clinical standard for children throughout all developmental stages