

## **Dental Check-Ups and Heart Health in Children**

People are often surprised to learn about the connections between dental hygiene and heart health in children, especially concerning children with preexisting medical conditions. For example, kids with congenital heart defects (CHDs) face higher risks for contracting dental illnesses such as tooth decay,

The heightened risk is mainly due to weakened enamel and related complications from their compromised cardiovascular health and care methods. With this in mind, you should have your child's dental health evaluated by a professional regularly to protect them from these vulnerabilities thoroughly. When doing so, discuss the following information with your pediatric dentist.

### **How Are Dental Hygiene and Heart Health Related?**

In the center of each of your teeth resides a blood vessel. Though we tend to think of our teeth and other bones in the body as empty skeleton components, blood flows through them just like all other parts of our bodies. While the inflow of oxygen certainly contributes to our teeth' health, strength, and vitality, mismanaged blood flow can also be quite bad.

Harmful bacteria that enter the mouth and cause issues such as cavities, for example, pose quite a risk to the cardiovascular system. This is because the tooth can essentially function as a doorway into your bloodstream, introducing medical dangers to the heart and vessels that are much more pronounced for those with artificial heart valves or other mechanical devices such as shunts. (Kids and adults with CHDs like bicuspid aortic valve and mitral valve prolapse are likely to need such devices.)

### **What to Know Before Attending a Dentist Appointment**

Communications between dental and heart health care providers are important. For example, kids with bicuspid aortic valves are likely to experience "aortic regurgitation," where blood may essentially flow backward into the heart. Those with mitral valve prolapse may face the same issue for slightly different reasons, specifically resulting in symptoms such as a heart murmur.

Although most cardiac conditions nowadays do not require antibiotics before dental procedure, speak with your dentist before the appointment to develop a plan to prevent bacterial infections from spreading from your child's teeth into the bloodstream. They will work with you to meet their needs as safely and efficiently as possible. Current recommendations for prophylaxis includes cyanotic children with shunts, individuals after heart transplant with valve abnormalities, those who had a recent heart surgery or procedure that resulted in a suture line or device implantation in the first 6 months, those who had surgery with residual flow around the surgical patch, and anyone who had a previous endocarditis(infection of the heart or its valves).