

Angel Teeth...

We all know that prevention and maintenance are keys to healthy teeth. Regular brushing, flossing, and fluoride application help to prevent cavities and the subsequent dental work needed to fix those cavities. Now, trying to explain that to a three year old...even if his parents are both dentists can be difficult. It just does not sink in.

So the chances are that our kids will get cavities in their baby teeth. After all, kids do not often watch what they eat or drink and baby teeth are actually weaker and more prone to decay than permanent teeth. We all hope this does not happen to our kiddos, but there is a reason why some dentists specialize in pediatric care.

When a baby tooth goes bad, there are two general options: fix it or remove it and hold the space it occupied with an appliance until the permanent tooth erupts. Fixing it, if possible, is usually healthier and more cost effective. For simplicity, let us discuss one of the ways to fix a severely decayed baby tooth...the stainless steel crown or, as the kids say, angel teeth. Angel teeth are prefabricated silver caps that protect baby teeth after large cavities have been removed.

By nature, primary teeth are small and more porous than permanent teeth. This means that cavities grow fast and can become too large to fill in a hurry. Regular check-up are extremely important so that small cavities can be caught early. There's nothing harder for a dentist, or parent, to deal with than a five year old with multiple toothaches and no history of positive dental experience.

When a baby tooth gets a large cavity, the tooth needs a little reinforcement to get it by until a permanent tooth grows into place and pushes it out. Stainless steel crowns add this protection and help to prevent further decay.

After a child is completely numb (sleepy juice), the cavity and any infected nerve tissue are removed from the tooth with dental hand pieces (Mr. Whistle and Mr. Bumpy). Then, a silver cap is custom fit to the tooth and cemented with a special cavity preventing paste. From then on, the tooth works just like before, just a little shinier. It can be brushed and flossed the same as an unrestored tooth and it gets pushed out when the permanent tooth comes in. Plus, I hear the Tooth Fairy pays a premium for angel teeth.

Until next time, keep smiling.

-Comments can be sent to Drs. Parrish through their website: www.ParrishDental.com.