

Why does my child go back on his/her own for appointments?

One of the major goals of our practice is to make going to the dentist relaxed and enjoyable. The foundation to this is built on establishing confidence and trust with our patients. To achieve this, we take the same approach as schools in that we ask that your child be allowed to experience that day's appointment without a parent in the treatment area. Children below younger than preschool age we do not expect to come back unaccompanied by a parent. However, often times when seeing an older sibling come back on their own it will encourage our youngest patients to want to do the same! We could just say that our solo policy works and leave it at that but we really want to help our parents understand what makes our philosophy so successful; Here's why:

- 1) We want to take the fear out of going to the dentist! When a parent accompanies a child into the treatment area, the child looks upon that parent as a protector. While this is entirely natural, we want to replace that perception of needing a protector with a feeling of ease and assurance. So, after the initial exam when a parent can be present with the child, we feel the relationship of confidence and trust is best achieved with the parent waiting in the lobby.
- 2) Anxiety can be contagious! Unfortunately, if a parent is anxious that anxiety can be passed on to the child. Often time, a well meaning but anxious parent can transfer their anxiety through both verbal and non-verbal cues.
- 3) We need their focus and attention on us! A parent's presence will naturally draw a child's attention away from us and onto the parent.
- 4) We want to keep appointments smooth and flowing. With a parent in the room, the child will often want to stop treatment and interact with them. (Scientifically this is known as stalling....) These multiple stops and starts lead to slower, less efficient appointments and often times the planned treatment can't be completed causing additional loss of time for the parent.

So there you have it, the reasons why we like to have your child come back 'solo' for appointments after their initial visit. We do understand and take into consideration age, maturity, and special needs situations as potential exceptions. However, time, patience, kindness, and trust almost always results in all our patients jumping up and running back on their own by the time they're 4. When they leave our practice after 18 enjoying good oral health and with a great attitude about going to the dentist, we know we've been successful!