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Dr. Michael A. Koumaras
of **Best Dentist 4 Kids**
explains why his practice
lives up to its name.

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The Name Says It All

In addition to Dr. Michael Koumaras (center), Best Dentist 4 Kids' clinical team includes Drs. Katie Cushing and Lennie Checchio.



Dr. Michael A. Koumaras of Best Dentist 4 Kids explains why his practice lives up to its name.

Dentistry is a family affair for Michael A. Koumaras, D.M.D. Not only does Dr. Koumaras come from a long line of dental health practitioners—his grandfather and an aunt are both oral surgeons—but he also runs Best Dentist 4 Kids, a thriving practice with offices in Philadelphia and Hatboro, alongside his mother, Lennie Checchio, D.D.S.

Dr. Koumaras, or “Dr. Mike,” as most patients call him, grew up in Northeast Philadelphia and graduated from Chestnut Hill Academy. He later went on to Lafayette College in Easton. While he crossed the state to attend

the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine to earn his doctorate in dentistry, he came home to finish a two-year training program at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children in 2009. He joined his mother in practice 11 years ago and has never looked back.

In addition to "Dr. Lennie," as she's known to patients, the Best Dentist 4 Kids team includes "Dr. Katie"—that is, Katie Cushing, D.M.D. An associate who takes great pride in her work, Dr. Cushing embodies a trait Dr. Koumaras says he looks for in all his team members—"an overall positive attitude."

"I literally try to hire a team of good people, because I feel like a team of good people will always try to do what's best for patients and families," says Dr. Koumaras, who is a Diplomate of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. "And we have a team of good people who want to do right."

Another distinctive trait of Dr. Koumaras' practice: the ability to communicate effectively with parents and patients like. Some parents have suggested to him that prior interactions with other pediatric dentistry practices left them confused or ill informed of the paths of treatment available to them.

"I make sure parents are informed of all treatment options," he shares. "I make recommendations, but I give options. There's always a plan B or C."

As a practice that strives to stay at the forefront of technology, Best Dentist 4 Kids employs a host of the latest tools and methodologies. For example, the use of digital panoramic imaging technology offers an alternative to patients who cannot tolerate traditional X-rays.

Best Dentist 4 Kids can also utilize zirconia crowns whenever desired. These natural-looking crowns are made of durable material that blends easily into a child's smile.

"Sometimes, when a parent comes in with a child with a lot of cavities, the parent doesn't want their child to have a mouthful of silver teeth," he explains. "Many times, the kids don't care, but the parents feel bad or don't want friends or family to see how much work the child has had."

The practice also utilizes ACTIVA BioACTIVE-RESTORATIVE, a composite that chemically bonds to teeth that practitioners can use to seal teeth and prevent bacterial microleakage. Natural, tough, and moisture tolerant, the material also blends seamlessly into a child's natural smile.

"I've been using ACTIVA for about five years and have found it bonds better to the tooth, and involves less chemicals," Dr. Koumaras shares. "You also don't have to cure in increments, it bonds better, lasts longer, and is easier to place—and that helps me be more efficient. That means quicker filling visits, and happy kids and parents."

Many of Dr. Koumaras' patients are newborns, some as young as three days old. Treating them, he says, is one of the job's greatest rewards.



"I have a laser that I can use to treat babies who are having a hard time breastfeeding," he explains. "We can release an attachment in the baby's mouth, and the moms are so happy because many had pain during breastfeeding. I really enjoy doing that in the office because parents leave just so happy."

The procedure—a laser frenectomy in medical terms—may sound intimidating, but Dr. Koumaras uses advanced laser technology to make it quick and almost painless; he suggests many babies sleep right through the procedure.

"Most other offices put infants to sleep to do this procedure, but I think it's ridiculous to put a newborn under anesthesia," he says. "Because we use a laser, the mouth heals quicker, more cleanly, and the procedure is really quick and it is not painful for the baby."

Even for those very young patients who are not experiencing such issues, Dr. Koumaras cautions parents not to ignore cavities in young teeth. "It only takes a year to a year and a half from the time a cavity appears to the time it hits the nerve," he explains.

Dr. Koumaras also employs silver diamine



fluoride, a liquid chemical that, when applied to a cavity at staggered intervals, can halt the progression of decay. While Dr. Koumaras states this may not be suitable for all patients, he notes that in certain cases—very young patients, for example—the application of these liquid treatments can slow the eradication of the tooth until the child is older and better able to tolerate treatment.

In addition to very young patients, Dr. Koumaras and his team have experience treating patients with special needs. He is on staff and has outstanding relationships with both St. Christopher's Hospital for Children and Holy Redeemer Hospital, meaning he is able to utilize their facilities for patients who may not be suited to a traditional office visit.

"One detail we pay very close attention to is what we're putting a child through and how much that child can tolerate," he explains. "Even the 'best' kids can only sit for so long. It takes some time to learn, but I really take a lot of pride in looking at treatment overall, from a child's age to behavior to the amount of work needed."

Aside from Dr. Koumaras' credentials, experience, and expertise, one of his best traits is the genuine joy he takes in laughing and smiling with his patients.

"My favorite thing is taking kid who had a bad experience at another office, a kid who comes in fearful, and showing that child and family that we can do the work with just TLC, light anesthetic, if any, and funny jokes," he says. "It happens at least once a day. There's a lot of bad dentistry out there, but for my patients, we're going to make sure every kid has a good experience and that the work gets done."

A dentist who inspires children to smile—a novel idea indeed. ■

→ Best Dentist 4 Kids

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