



Looking after your children's teeth

Tooth decay is the most common mouth disease affecting children and young people in UK, yet it is almost entirely preventable.

The following key points provide a summary of the simple steps that you and your family can take every day to have healthy teeth and gums.

Evidence tells us that tooth brushing with fluoride toothpaste is one of the most effective ways of preventing tooth decay. Gum disease can also be prevented by regular brushing of teeth and gums to remove plaque.

Top tips for tooth brushing

- Start brushing your child's teeth as soon as the first baby tooth appears (usually at about 6 months of age) and brush all tooth surfaces and the gum line where plaque gathers.
- It is good to brush (or help your child in brushing) their teeth until at least seven years-old. This helps to supervise the amount of toothpaste they use and make sure that the teeth are thoroughly cleaned.
- Brush the teeth at least twice a day - last thing at night before bed, and at least on one other occasion. Brushing at bedtime ensures the fluoride continues working while your child is asleep and when saliva flow decreases.
- Choose a small headed toothbrush with medium texture bristles for your child. Use either a manual or powered (rotation action) brush.

More information on Page 2

For additional Parent Tips see www.ihv.org.uk

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The most important thing you can do to prevent tooth decay is use appropriate fluoride toothpaste. Take a look at the small print on the tube for details.

- Toothpastes containing 1350 – 1500 parts per million (ppm) fluoride are the most effective at helping to prevent tooth decay.
- For children under three years-old, use a smear of toothpaste containing no less than 1000 ppm fluoride (Figure 1).
- Children between three and six years-old should use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste containing more than 1000 ppm fluoride (Figure 2).
- Teach your child to spit out excess toothpaste after brushing, but do not rinse with water, as this washes away the fluoride.
- For older children, disclosing tablets can help to show where areas of the tooth surface have been missed when brushing.

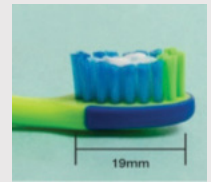


Figure 1: Smear

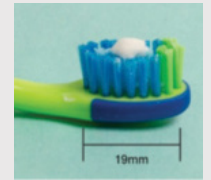


Figure 2: Pea-size

Healthy eating

Eating sugar is the major cause of tooth decay. Each time we eat sugary food and drink, the bacteria in dental plaque produce acid that attacks teeth. If we eat or drink sugary foods frequently throughout the day, we have more 'acid attacks' which can lead to tooth decay. The following points will help give your child a healthy start:

- Breast milk is the only food or drink babies need for around the first six months of their life. Formula milk is the only suitable alternative to breast milk.
- Once you introduce solid foods, continue to breastfeed or give your baby infant formula alongside an increasingly varied diet until they're at least one year-old. Cows' milk as a drink can be introduced from 12 months-old.
- Only breastmilk, infant formula or cooled, boiled water should be given in bottles.
- Use a free-flow, lidded, spouted cup (without a valve) for infant formula or water from 6 months-old and discard bottles with teats.
- Milk or water can be given to drink between meals.
- Try keeping sweet drinks to a minimum, especially fizzy and fruit juice and smoothies. Limit the amount of fruit juice and smoothies to no more than 150 millilitres (mls) a day. Offer fruit juices at mealtimes only, to protect teeth from decay.
- The frequency and amount of sugary foods and drinks should be reduced. Avoid added or 'free sugars' (sugar added to food and drinks, as well as naturally occurring sugar in unsweetened fruit juices, honey and syrups). Naturally occurring sugar in dried fruit, such as raisins, dates and apricots can also contribute to tooth decay.

- Keep an eye on the sugar content of foods you offer regularly. The recommended maximum intake of free sugars is no more than:
 - 19g per day = 5 sugar cubes for 4-6 year-olds
 - 24g per day = 6 sugar cubes for 7-10 year-olds
 - 30g per day = 7 sugar cubes for 11 years and over.
- Avoid sugary foods and drinks just before bedtime.
- Encourage your child to eat a healthy balanced diet rich in fruit, vegetables and starchy foods and some proteins and milk and dairy products, but low in fats, sugar and salt.
- Always ask for and use sugar-free medicines.

Visiting the dentist

- Take your child to the dentist as soon as the first teeth erupt and ensure they have a dental check by 1 year of age. Ask your dentist about fluoride varnish.
- Mothers are entitled to free NHS treatment during pregnancy and until their child is one year-old, and children are entitled to free NHS treatment.

More information:

- NHS Better Health Healthier Families: <https://bit.ly/3Xj4jaw>
- Healthy Eating: <https://bit.ly/3vfb5CR>
- NHS Choices - Looking after your baby's teeth: <https://bit.ly/3Jtmwvx>
- Dental Check by One (DCby1) national guidance: <https://bit.ly/3uhPzOb>

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