

Guide to Looking after your Child's Teeth

Information for parents and carers (taken from Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust)

5 Top tips to look after your child's teeth:

- ✓ **Start brushing** and getting used to toothpaste as their **first tooth starts to come** through around 6 months old.
- ✓ When they get their first tooth, start to **encourage your child to drink from a free-flowing cup** or open top cup, so that bottle use does not continue past their first birthday.
- ✓ Teeth should be **brushed twice a day for 2 minutes with fluoride toothpaste** including last thing at night before bed.
- ✓ After brushing teeth, **spit don't rinse**.
- ✓ Continue regular appointments with the dentists, the time between appointments should never be more than 12 months.

Why is it important to look after baby teeth?

Milk teeth have an important role to play as they hold space for the second teeth to descend into. Because the enamel is thin, baby teeth are more likely to be affected by decay and erosion if exposed to too much sugar or acidic drinks. This can lead to tooth ache and infection and sometimes require a general anaesthetic to remove the affected teeth.

Age related information about tooth brushing

• Babies aged 0-2 years old

Start brushing your baby's teeth when the first tooth starts to erupt (around 6 months old). Use a **smear** of fluoride toothpaste (**minimum 1000ppm***).

You can also use adult toothpaste if your teeth are at higher risk of decay (1450ppm*), but please seek advice from your dentist first.

Parents or carers should brush their child's teeth.

• Children aged 3 - 5 years old

Use a **pea size** amount of fluoride toothpaste, **minimum of 1450ppm*** (adult toothpaste).

Parents or carers should brush their child's teeth. This is best undertaken in front of a mirror so that your child can see how you are brushing. Consider using a toothbrushing chart each time their teeth are brushed as a reminder. They may also enjoy the Hey Duggee Toothbrushing episode.

• Children aged 6 - 9 years old

Adults should continue to **supervise tooth brushing** until their child can brush effectively alone.

Consider the use of brushing charts or **brushing 'apps'** on a mobile phone / tablet to aid and encourage tooth brushing.

Consider using a **mouthwash** at different times to brushing teeth.

• Children aged 10 and over

Consider the use of **disclosing tablets** to show any plaque on teeth. Use a **pea size** amount of fluoride toothpaste, **minimum of 1450ppm*** (adult toothpaste). If your child's teeth are at high risk of decay, they may be prescribed a higher fluoride toothpaste by your dentist



A smear of toothpaste on a toothbrush.



A pea sized amount of toothpaste on a toothbrush

Dietary information for your child: From birth

- **Do** replace your baby's bottle with a free flow feed cup by the time your baby is six months of age.
- **Do** ensure grandparents / carers / family members are also well informed and involved in healthy eating.
- **Do** encourage your child to drink from a free-flowing cup or open top cup from the age of 6 months. Although breast milk or infant formula milk meet all your baby's nutritional needs for the first 6 months of their life, regular or demand feeding can cause decay in the baby teeth.
- **Do not** use fruit juices, sweetened milk, sweetened drink, or soy formula milk in feeding bottles.
- **Do not** give your baby anything to eat or drink after brushing their teeth at night.



The white blocks represent sugar cubes and show how much sugar each drink contains.

Dietary Information for your child: Age 1 and over

- **Do** restrict **sugar to no more than four times per day** (meal times).
- **Do** give your child **water or milk** to drink between meals (this includes semi-skimmed milk).
- **Do** give your child **sugar-free snacks** only.
- **Do** be aware of hidden sugars in food.
- **Do** be aware of acid content of drinks.
- **Do** read the label on foods / drinks. No added sugar does not mean 'sugar free'.

Source: NHS.uk, The Eatwell Plate, The Department of Health, 2011

- **Do not** give your child a dummy which has a drink or something sweet in it
 - **Do not** give your child anything to eat or drink after brushing their teeth at night before they go to sleep apart from plain still water.
- ✓ It's also recommended that parents shouldn't "clean" their babies' dummies or bottles by putting them in their own mouths. You could pass on bacteria to your child which would otherwise not be present in their mouths.

The Eatwell Plate



Dental visits at least once every 12 months

- Age 0+** Take your child for a dental visit as soon as their first tooth comes through their gums, so they will get used to the new setting. This should be before their 1st Birthday.
- Age 3+** Your child can expect to have fluoride varnish application on their teeth at every dental visit. When they get their permanent molar teeth, they should be 'fissure sealed' if cooperation allows.
- Age 10+** Your dentist may consider an orthodontic referral for further treatment. Your dentist may prescribe higher fluoride toothpaste if your child has a high risk of decay.
- All Ages** Visit the dentist at least every six months

General Information: when to expect teeth to come through (erupt) through a child's gum.

- **New / erupting baby teeth.** There are usually 20 baby teeth in total.
 - At age 0-1 year old: Front teeth should appear.
 - At age 1-2 years old: Side teeth should appear.
 - At age 2-3 years old: Back teeth should appear.
- **New / erupting adult teeth.** Adults normally have 32 permanent teeth.
 - At age 5-6 years old: New adult molar (back teeth) will erupt.
 - At age 6-9 years old: Front teeth will be replaced by new adult teeth.
 - At age 9-12 years old: Wobbly canine teeth will be replaced by adult teeth.
 - At age 10-13 years old: Wobbly side teeth will be replaced by premolar teeth and new second molar teeth.

