

An Oral Health Guide to Teeth for children three years old and above

Teeth are very important (even milk teeth)

A child's first tooth usually appears between the ages of 6-12 months. Although these teeth are temporary they are just as important as adult teeth because they aid speech, allow children to eat a varied healthy diet, give them confidence in their appearance and hold the space for the adult teeth.

Studies have shown that poor oral health can increase the risk of certain diseases such as heart disease, stroke, lung disease, dementia and diabetes, as well as contributing to obesity. It is therefore important that the mouth is cared for from early age.

Three ways to prevent dental disease

- * **Brush children's teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.**
- * **Keep sugary foods and drinks to mealtimes only.**
- * **Visit the dentist regularly.**



For children **aged 3 years old** and above use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste containing **1,350 – 1,500ppm** which is the amount found in standard adult toothpaste. Encourage spitting out after brushing, rather than rinsing with water, this will allow the fluoride to work more effectively.

Sugar in food & drink

The risk of tooth decay increases with the number of times that teeth are exposed to sugar each day
(in both food & drink).

It is best to limit foods and drinks containing sugar to main mealtimes, this allows time between meals for saliva to help neutralise (get rid of) the acid and minimise the damage caused.

Plaque bacteria + sugar = acid attack = decay

To reduce the risk of tooth decay it is important to limit sugary foods and drinks to meal times only.

- * If a snack is given, choose foods such as fresh fruit, raw vegetables, cheese, crackers, or other non-sugary foods.
- * In dried fruit, the sugar has been altered and can cause decay, so please keep these to mealtimes only.
- * Water and milk are the only drinks we recommend between meals.
- * Fruit juice and fruit squash are acidic so should be given at mealtimes only and diluted with water.
- * Do not give sugary drinks at or before bedtime because of the risk of decay.
- * When giving medicines or cough sweets to a child, remember to make sure you choose a sugar-free variety.
- * Try not to give your child sweets as treats or rewards.
- * If your child attends a nursery or school which provides snacks please ensure that they follow these guidelines.

Make healthy choices easy for your child by having fresh fruit and vegetables readily available.

Visiting the Dentist

A child should visit the dentist regularly. They should have a check-up at least once a year. Treatment is free under the NHS for all children.

To find an NHS dentist in your area visit: www.nhs.uk and type 'find a dentist' in the search box.

Produced by The Buckinghamshire Oral Health Improvement Team, Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL).



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