

Taking care of teeth and gums

A guide to oral health for you and your family



Why is a healthy mouth important?

Good oral health is not just about having an attractive smile, although that is important too! A clean, comfortable mouth is essential for good physical health and general quality of life.

Poor oral health and hygiene can lead to dental and gum disease with associated pain and difficulties in eating. Bacteria and infections in the mouth can also have a significant negative effect on general health.

Brushing

- Brush your teeth for two minutes last thing at night and one other time during the day.
- Make sure you brush all the surfaces of your teeth and gums, which should take about two minutes.
- Use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste containing no less than 1,350ppm (parts per million) fluoride for children over 3 years of age and adults alike.
- Children will need help with brushing until they are at least 7-years-old.
- After brushing, spit out any excess toothpaste, but don't rinse your mouth with water or mouthwash. This is so that your teeth get the protective benefits of the fluoride in the toothpaste.



Gum disease

Gum disease has been linked with general health conditions such as diabetes, stroke, cardiovascular disease, poor pregnancy outcomes and even dementia. So having a healthy mouth may help to improve your general health.

Look out for the first signs of gum disease when you brush your teeth. If gums bleed, this may mean that plaque is not being removed properly.

With improved brushing techniques and by cleaning between teeth with floss or interdental brushes, gum health can be greatly improved.

How can I prevent tooth decay?

Tooth decay occurs as a result of frequent consumption of foods and drinks that contain sugar. The bacteria that is present in the mouth acts with the sugar to create an acid on teeth.

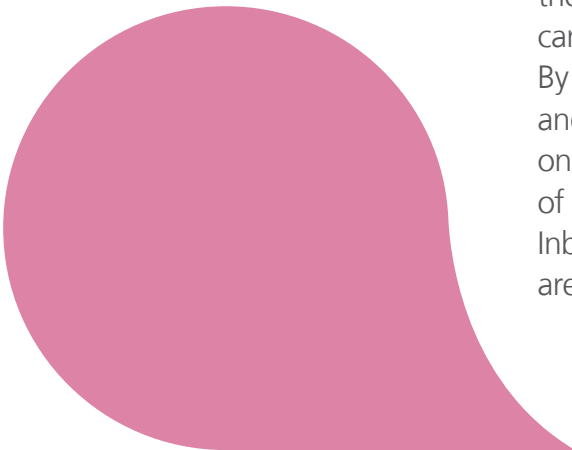
This acid attacks the teeth and after this happens many times, the tooth enamel may break down, forming a hole. The tooth can then decay more quickly.

You can limit your number of acid attacks in a day by having sugary foods and drinks just at mealtimes, and reduce your risk of decay.

What is dental erosion?

This happens when acid in the drinks we consume, wears away the enamel on our teeth, which can lead to sensitive teeth.

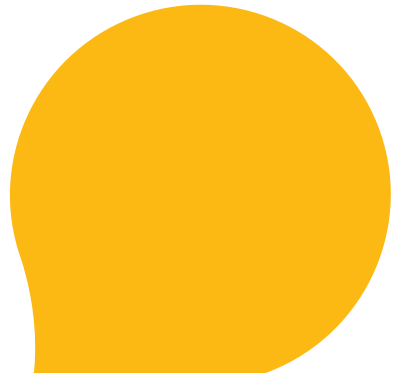
By drinking squashes, fruit juices and fizzy drinks at mealtimes only, we can lessen the risk of developing dental erosion. Inbetween meals, water and milk are safe drinks for teeth.



Key messages for healthy teeth

For adults the general advice to support positive oral health is:

- Brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste - last thing at night and on one other occasion
- After brushing spit out the toothpaste but don't rinse with water or mouthwash
- Avoid sweet and sugary food and drinks between meals (this includes dried fruit, honey and pure fruit juice)
- See a dentist regularly – at least once a year or as often as recommended. Don't wait until problems start
- Keep alcohol consumption to low risk (recommended) levels to reduce risk of oral cancer
- Take advantage of free dental treatment during pregnancy and up to one year after your baby is born
- Avoid smoking
- Avoid chewing tobacco including products like paan, gutka and khat as these can cause oral cancer
- Try to eat a balanced diet with at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day



To find an NHS dentist near you

Visit the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk. Look under 'Find local services'. Click Dentists and type in your postcode to get a list of dentists in your area.

Your dentist will decide how often they need to see you. This may be in as little as three months, but if you have no current problems, your dentist might not need to see you for up to two years.

For more information on looking after teeth go to:

www.nhs.uk/livewell/dentalhealth

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Urdu

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