

Looking after children's teeth

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio tape or computer disk, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please telephone the PALS desk on 01271 314090.

Introduction

This leaflet aims to provide basic information about how to look after your children's teeth and help prevent decay.

Cause of decay

Tooth decay occurs when bacteria in the mouth break down sugar to cause an acid attack, which then dissolves the teeth.

sugar + bacteria (plaque) = acid

acid + enamel + number of acid attacks = decay

Evidence shows that, the more often you have sugar in your mouth, the more likely you are to get tooth decay.

Brushing your teeth with fluoride toothpaste can protect your teeth.

Choose the right fluoride toothpaste

Children aged 0-3 years should use toothpaste containing at least 1000ppm of fluoride but use only a smear on the brush.

Children over 3 years should use a pea-sized amount of family toothpaste which should contain 1350-1500 ppm of fluoride. This will be marked on the tube.

'Brush last thing at night and one other time with a fluoride toothpaste'

If your child has had teeth removed due to decay, and is ten years of age or older, they may benefit from using a higher dose fluoride toothpaste. This can be prescribed by the dentist.

Do not let your child eat toothpaste.

Toothbrushing

Help your child brush their teeth until they are at least 8 years old.

When brushing, make sure you brush the teeth right up to the gums.



Once over 8 years old you still need to check they are brushing their teeth.

Choose a small headed toothbrush no bigger than a pound coin.

Do not wet the toothbrush before cleaning as this dilutes the toothpaste.

Children should spit out and not rinse after brushing. Leaving the fluoride toothpaste in the saliva can help strengthen teeth.

Gums can bleed during brushing, due to plaque being present. Do not stop brushing.

***'Spit, don't
rinse.'***

Make sure you brush twice a day for 2-3 minutes.

Brush last thing at night and one other time during the day for 2-3 minutes with a fluoride toothpaste. Brushing last thing at night can help protect the teeth as fluoride in the toothpaste continues to work when they are asleep.

Replace your child's toothbrush when it shows signs of wear or every three months.

Do not share toothbrushes.

Snacks and drinks

Lots of sugar in our diet comes from biscuits, cakes, sweets, chocolate, drinks and breakfast cereals.

Sugary foods and drinks between meals can damage teeth, try to keep these to mealtimes only.

***'Avoid sugary
food and
drinks between
meals'***

Some safe snacks ideas

Bread: Toast, crumpets, pitta bread, baps & muffins.

Fruit: apples, pears, bananas, grapes, kiwis, strawberries, blueberries & lots more. **Be very careful with dried fruit** as they are very sugary; keep them to meals.

Vegetables: Celery, carrot, cucumber, peppers & lots more.

Dairy: Plain yogurt (good with fresh fruit), a matchbox size of low fat cheese.

Drinks: Still water (not fizzy) is good between meals. So is plain milk. Keep any other drinks to mealtimes. Even the 'no added sugar', low sugar or natural sugar drinks can still decay teeth. Flavoured water can also be acidic.

Read food labels

The kinds of sugar to avoid are on labels as glucose, fructose, maltose, sucrose, maltodextrin and honey.

Try to keep these to mealtimes.



Sugar free medicines

Unfortunately some medicines contain sugar, which can cause tooth decay if given frequently for long periods of time.

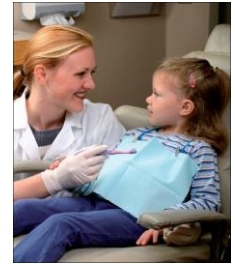
Check with your doctor or pharmacist to see if a sugar-free alternative is available.

If possible, give medicines at mealtimes and not last thing at night.

Visit your dentist regularly

It is important for you and your baby to visit your dentist at least once a year. They will check your teeth and gums to make sure they are healthy.

To find a local NHS dentist, call 03330 063 300 or 01392 822348, or email accessdentalhelpline@nhs.net



Useful contact

Exeter NHS Dental Access Centre

RD&E Hospital (Heavitree)
Gladstone Road
Exeter
EX1 2ED
Tel: 01392 405700

Barnstaple NHS Dental Access Centre

Barnstaple Health Centre
Vicarage Street
Barnstaple
EX32 7BH
Tel: 01271 370562

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or e-mail ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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