

How and when to brush your child's teeth

Hints and Tips



Brush teeth twice a day

A toothbrushing routine should commence as soon as your child's first tooth appears. Brush all teeth for at least 2 minutes twice a day including last thing at night before bed. If you choose to use a mouth wash or mouth rinse it is advised you do so at a different time to when you brush your teeth.

Please note - even if your child joins in with a toothbrushing programme at their setting or school it is still important that he/she also brushes their teeth at home twice a day.

Use fluoride toothpaste

Fluoride toothpaste helps to strengthen teeth. If your child is under the age of 3 years use a smear of toothpaste that contains 1000 parts per million (PPM) fluoride. If your child is aged 3 years and over use a pea sized amount of toothpaste that contains 1350 – 1500 parts per million (PPM) fluoride. Encourage your child not to swallow toothpaste during and after brushing.

Adult supervision

It is advised that children should be supervised and helped with toothbrushing until the age of 7 as they are not able to remove plaque effectively. To do this you may find it easier to stand or sit behind your child, cradling their chin in your hand so you can reach their top and bottom teeth more easily.

Toothbrushing actions

Toothbrushing should be carried out using gentle circular movements, starting at the back of the mouth and moving forwards, repeat on both sides, top and bottom. Care must be taken to not damage the gums. Brush all surfaces and sides of your child's teeth. Pay special attention to the biting surfaces where food can stick and get trapped. Remember to brush where the gums and teeth meet. Once toothbrushing has been completed there is no need to rinse, just spit out any remaining toothpaste. Rinsing with lots of water after brushing should be discouraged - spit don't rinse.

*It is appreciated that a good brushing technique can be quite difficult to master - just keep trying. One of the most important things to do is to get the fluoride onto your child's teeth and for them to accept that toothbrushing is part of their daily routine.



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Information for Parents/Carers

Healthy teeth and gums for children



What is tooth decay?

Plaque

Plaque is a thin sticky coat that sticks to teeth which can contribute to tooth decay. Plaque can be reduced by brushing teeth twice daily for at least 2 minutes and by limiting the amount of sugary foods and drinks we consume. The more often your child has sugary foods and drinks, the more likely they are to develop tooth decay.

Tooth decay

The basic process that causes dental decay (holes in the teeth) is often called an 'acid attack' due to the process, that when sugars enter the mouth they are rapidly absorbed by the (plaque) bacteria on the surface of the teeth. The sugar is converted by the bacteria into an acid as a waste product and this eventually breaks down the outer surface (enamel) of the tooth. Saliva helps repair this process by replacing the minerals lost from the tooth enamel. The severity of the attack can be reduced by decreasing the frequency and the amount of consumption of sugars.

Tooth decay is preventable

Find out below how you can help your child keep tooth decay at bay

Bottle to cup

From 6 months of age children should be introduced to drinking from a cup. Feeding from a bottle should be discouraged once a child reaches 12 months of age. Remember giving drinks other than water or milk may seriously damage your child's teeth.

Limit sugary snacks and drinks

If you choose to give your child sugary snacks and drinks try to keep to meal times only. Eating sugar too often can cause tooth decay.

Choose healthy snacks and drinks

In between meals choose healthy snacks and drinks.

Sugar awareness

When you offer your child a snack or drink think about its sugar content. Try checking the list of ingredients. Words used to describe sugars to foods and drinks that are capable of causing tooth decay are: *Sucrose, dextrose, glucose, fructose, hydrolysed starch, honey, invert sugar and corn syrup.*

Dried fruits such as raisins are sticky and can stick to the teeth. They are also high in sugar and can contribute to the development of tooth decay.

Fruit juices and drinks containing natural sugar can also cause tooth decay and acid erosion and therefore should also be limited to mealtimes only.

Visit the dentist

Take your child to the dentist for regular checkups.



Children under the age of 3 years should use a smear of toothpaste that contains 1000 parts per million (PPM) fluoride.



Children aged 3 years and over should use a pea sized amount of toothpaste that contains 1350 - 1500 parts per million (PPM) fluoride.

Healthy snacks and drinks ideas

Savoury sandwiches, plain bagels, unsweetened cereals, homemade plain popcorn, pretzels (low-salt), plain crackers, breadsticks, rice cakes, melba toast, baked potato pieces.

Fruit and vegetable pieces like celery, carrot sticks, cucumber, tomatoes, berries, oranges, melons, pineapple, pears, tangerines, canned fruits in natural juices.

Cheeses like edam, gouda and cheddar.

Lean sliced meats, boiled egg, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, unsalted nuts.

Water should be available to drink at any time of the day. It quenches thirst, does not spoil the appetite and does not harm teeth.

Milk does not harm teeth when given between main meals but be careful not to offer milk freely as it may spoil a child's appetite. Milk could be included as part of snack time.

Always check for potential allergies when introducing your child to new foods or drinks.

Remember

Adult supervision and help whilst toothbrushing should be given to children until the age of 7

Make sure your child brushes their teeth twice a day for at least 2 minutes

Try to limit sugary foods and drinks to mealtimes only

In between meals choose healthy snacks and drinks

Take your child for regular check-ups at the dentist