

Your child's dental treatment under general anaesthetic

Treatment for dental decay

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Introduction

If your child has dental decay, they might need treatment under general anaesthetic. This means they will be asleep during the treatment, and will not feel any pain.

Your child might need general anaesthetic because of the type of treatment they are having, or if they are not able to cope with the treatment when they are awake.

This booklet has information on dental decay, the type of treatment your child might have, and what to expect when you to come to hospital.

Dental decay

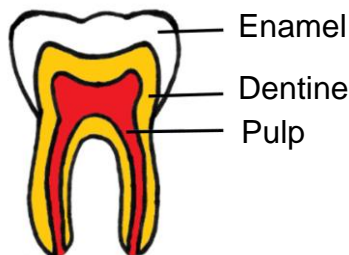
Dental decay is damage to a tooth. The damage is caused by bacteria in the mouth that turns sugars into acid. Over time, the acid makes a small hole (cavity) in the tooth.

This can cause pain, an infection and swelling if it is not treated. Infection in a baby tooth can cause damage to the adult tooth developing underneath it.

Dental decay can be caused by:

- not brushing the teeth well
- having lots of sugar in the diet
- having developmental conditions affecting the teeth

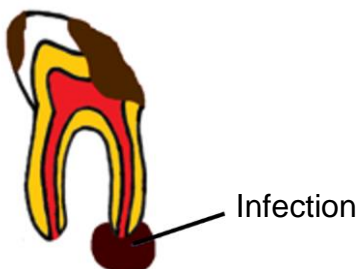
Your child's teeth are made up of 3 layers, which are shown in the picture below. The treatment for each tooth will depend on which layer the decay has reached.



Sometimes the decay is between the teeth, where you cannot see it.



The pulp is the centre of the tooth, where the tooth's nerves are. When the decay is close to or has reached the pulp, there is more risk of having pain and infection. If this happens, the tooth will need to be removed (see page 7).



Treatments using general anaesthetic

Most children will have one or more of the following treatments if they have dental decay. These treatments are done under general anaesthetic, so your child will be asleep and will not feel any pain.

Check-up (examination)

Some children find it difficult to have a check-up when they are awake. If this is the case, the check-up can be done under general anaesthetic so that they are asleep. The dentist might take X-rays during the check-up, to help them decide which treatment your child needs.

Fissure sealants

A sealant is a white coating which is put in the grooves on the surface of the teeth. This protects the teeth by helping to stop food and bacteria getting into these grooves and causing decay. Fissure sealants can sometimes wear away or chip over time, and might need replacing.

Your local dentist might be able to do this treatment if your child is able to cope while they are awake. Your child will still need more treatment at the hospital, but it means they will be under general anaesthetic for less time when they come to hospital.

White fillings

Teeth that have small holes (cavities) in can sometimes be treated by removing the decay and placing a white filling in the tooth. The filling protects the tooth and helps to stop more decay. Fillings can sometimes wear away over time, or fall out and need replacing.

Preformed crowns

Crowns are silver coloured, stainless-steel, caps. They help to protect baby teeth at the back of the mouth by stopping any food or bacteria getting to the tooth and causing decay.

They are used when the small holes (cavities) in the tooth are too big for a filling, or if the teeth are weak. They give extra protection to healthy teeth if your child is at high risk of decay.

Preformed crowns cover the entire crown of the tooth, which is the white part of the tooth above the gum. This type of crown is only used for baby teeth, and is different from metal crowns used on adult teeth.



Crowns will be lost with the tooth when it falls out naturally. We only use crowns on the back teeth, so they are not too noticeable. Children are usually pleased to have a shiny cap rather than a tooth with a hole in it.

Sometimes these crowns can wear away over time or fall off and may need to be replaced.

Removing the tooth (extraction)

If the decay has reached the pulp of the tooth (see page 4) and is causing your child pain or an infection, then the tooth will need to be taken out. We do not offer root canal treatment options for these teeth.

Removing the tooth will help with any pain, and stop any pain or infection in the future, which could harm developing adult teeth.

After having a tooth removed, your child might have some pain, bleeding, bruising, swelling or an infection. The dentist or nurse will give you lots of advice about how to help these symptoms.

There will be gaps in your child's mouth after they have had a tooth removed. The adult teeth will still come through when they are ready, and fill these gaps.

For some children, losing baby teeth early due to decay can cause the adult teeth to be more crowded when they come through. If this happens, your child might need brace treatment when they are older.

If there is an abscess (caused by an infection) under a baby tooth, the adult tooth can sometimes come out when the baby tooth is removed. This is rare, and you will be told if this has happened.

Any other treatment required

Treatment plans can often change. Sometimes dental decay can get worse and need a different treatment.

Due to long waiting lists for treatment, if your child's brushing and diet does not improve, the decay might get worse. This means more fillings, crowns or teeth removal might be needed on the day of their treatment.

The dentist might not be able to tell you exactly what treatment is needed before the operation. This is because they might find this out once your child is asleep and they can check the decay.

As there are risks when having a general anaesthetic, the dentist will make sure they treat all the dental decay. This is so there is less chance your child will need a second general anaesthetic for dental treatment in the future.

The risks of a general anaesthetic will be explained to you by a dentist and in a separate leaflet. You will be able to speak with the anaesthetist and ask any questions you have on the day of the operation.

The day of your child's treatment

We have a friendly team of dentists, anaesthetists and nurses who will be looking after your child on the day of their treatment. We will give you instructions to follow so your child is ready for their general anaesthetic.

You will be able to stay with your child until they are asleep, and a nurse will get you when your child starts to wake up.

Children who understand what is going to happen feel calmer and more confident. The QR code below takes you to a child friendly video, which follows a child called Scott during their dental treatment under general anaesthetic.

Watch this video 1 week before treatment, and again the night before. Choose a time when it is quiet, and you won't be interrupted for 15 minutes. Scan the QR code using the camera on your mobile phone.



If you have any questions about your child's treatment, please contact us before the operation (see page 10).

After treatment

Your child will be sent home from the hospital once they have recovered from having a general anaesthetic.

Unless the hospital team tell you otherwise, your child's care will be transferred to their local dentist when they leave hospital.

It is very important that your child visits their local dentist for regular check-ups. They will be able to give you lots of advice about brushing teeth and your child's diet to help stop dental decay. They will also be able to put fluoride varnish on to protect the teeth from any more decay.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's dental treatment under general anaesthetic, or if you want to cancel or rearrange an appointment, please contact the paediatric dental team, **tel:** 020 7188 7947 Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

Out of hours and at weekends you should call NHS 111.

For more information on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit, **web:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline, **tel:** 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, **email:** mymedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), **tel:** 020 7188 8801, **email:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk. To make a complaint, contact the complaints department, **tel:** 020 7188 3514, **email:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch, **tel:** 020 7188 8815, **email:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day, **tel:** 111, **web:** www.111.nhs.uk



Leaflet number: 5187/VER1

Date published: June 2021

Review date: June 2024

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NHS Foundation Trust

A list of sources is available on request