

Cleft and your baby's oral health

0 to 5 years



Your child's oral health

Children with cleft lip and/or palate can be at higher risk of developing tooth decay and having dental problems such as:

- extra or missing teeth
- teeth which are not in the correct position
- teeth which have not been formed properly

Because of this, it is essential that you follow advice on toothbrushing, diet and regular dental visits for your child.

The specialist cleft dental team and your local dentist will work together to look after your child's oral health, but prevention is always our main goal.

When your child's teeth will appear

Your baby's teeth will start to show at about 6 months old.

Usually, by 30 months old your child will have 20 baby teeth.

Your child might have some extra, missing or uneven teeth due to their cleft.

Cleaning your child's teeth

- Toothbrushing should be started as soon as your child's first tooth comes through.
- Brush your child's teeth at least 2 times, every day. Brush last thing at night, before bed, and on 1 other occasion.
- Use a fluoride toothpaste containing 1,350 to 1,500ppm of fluoride. This may be a higher fluoride level than you expect, but it is recommended due to your child's cleft. The amount of fluoride in the toothpaste can be found on the side of the tube.
- Use a smear of toothpaste if your child is under 3 years old and a pea-sized amount if your child is over 3 years old.
- Encourage your child to spit after brushing but **not to rinse with water**, as this will wash away the fluoride.
- Help your child with brushing until they are at least 8 years old.
- Your dentist can show you brushing and positioning techniques, particularly around the cleft area.

Going to the dentist

- You should register your child with a dentist any time before their first birthday.
- Even though a thorough examination may not be possible, your child will get used to the dental environment.
- Your child should then see the dentist every 4 to 6 months for regular check-ups.

Bottle-feeding advice

- Only milk or water should be used in the bottle.
- Never add sugar, or put sugary drinks such as juice, into the bottle.
- It is important to reduce bottle feeding by the time your child is 1 year old, and stop by 18 months.
- At weaning, try to introduce a free-flowing cup.

Eating and drinking

Choose savoury snacks, such as:

- cheese
- raw vegetables
- crackers
- rice cakes
- breadsticks

It is important to limit your child's food and drink which contain sugar. Avoid sweets, chocolates, cakes, juices and fizzy drinks. If your child is having these, save them for meal times.

When your child is over 1 year old, they should avoid night-time drinks except for water. The only safe bedtime or night-time drink is water.

Remember that it is about how often your child is having sugary foods and drinks, not just the amount.

Contact us

Evelina London Cleft Services Dental Department

1st floor, Block C, South Wing
St Thomas' Hospital
Westminster Bridge Road
London SE1 7EH

phone 020 7188 1321

email cleftservices@gstt.nhs.uk

Main switchboard

phone 020 7188 7188

For more information on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit

web www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets

Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline.

phone 020 7188 3003 Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm **email**

letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

phone 020 7188 8801 (PALS)

email pals@gstt.nhs.uk

phone 020 7188 3514 (complaints)

email complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Cleft Services Dental Department map

Scan the QR code with your mobile phone to view the map or visit [web](#)

www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/resources/maps/south-wing-first-floor.pdf



Leaflet number: 4938/VER2

Date published: Sept 2023

Review date: Sept 2026

© 2023 Guy's and St Thomas'
NHS Foundation Trust

A list of sources is
available on request



Guy's and St Thomas'
NHS Foundation Trust