

# Cleft and your child's oral health

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 about toothbrushing, diet and regular dental visits for your child.

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

## **Your child's teeth development**

Your child is now at a stage where their baby teeth will start to fall out, and be replaced with adult teeth.

Over the next 18 to 24 months, some of their baby teeth will start to feel loose.

Usually the lower front (incisor) teeth are the first to become loose, and then the upper incisors.

Also, 4 of the back-adult teeth (first permanent molars) will start to come through, 1 in each corner of the mouth. These do not push any baby teeth, but push through the gum.

Your child might get some discomfort during this time. It is important to keep the area clean.

## Cleaning your child's teeth

- 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 1,500 ppm of fluoride. The amount of fluoride in the toothpaste can be found on the side of the tube.
- Use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste 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.

## Eating and drinking

Choose savoury snacks such as:

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

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

Acidic food and drinks can damage the enamel on teeth (erosion). Limit your child's intake of acidic food and drinks, such as fruit juices and fizzy drinks, to mealtimes.

Your child should avoid night-time drinks except for water. The only safe bed-time 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.

## **Other support your child will need**

Your local dentist should apply fluoride varnish to your child's teeth 2 to 4 times each year.

Plastic coatings (fissure sealants) might be placed on the biting surface of the adult molars to prevent decay.

As part of the cleft care, the cleft team will also see your child at certain times.

## Contact us

### Evelina London Cleft Services Dental Department

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Westminster Bridge Road  
London SE1 7EH

**phone** 020 7188 1321

**email** [cleftservices@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**phone** 020 7188 3514 (complaints)

**email** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto: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](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/resources/maps/south-wing-first-floor.pdf)



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