

Your child's oral health

Looking after teeth and gums

This leaflet has information and tips to help you look after your child's teeth and gums. If you have any questions, please contact a dentist caring for your child.

Toothbrushing

Teeth and gums should be brushed two times every day. In the morning after breakfast, and at night before bed. This can help stop tooth decay and keep the gums healthy.

Brush all the surfaces of the teeth (including where they meet the gums) for at least 2 minutes. Use a timer or song to measure the time.

It's best to help or watch your child brush their teeth until they are at least 7 years old.

Toothpaste

- Children **0 to 3 years old** should use a smear of toothpaste, which is about the size of a grain of rice.
- Children **over 3 years old** should use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste.

Toothpaste with fluoride in helps to keep the teeth and gums healthy. The level of fluoride is on the toothpaste label, or on the packet. 'ppm' stands for 'parts per million'.

- Children **0 to 3 years old** should use toothpaste with a fluoride level of at least 1,000ppm.
- Children **over 3 years old** should use toothpaste with a fluoride level of 1,350ppm to 1,500ppm.

Spit the toothpaste out after brushing. **Do not rinse** with water, because this will wash away the fluoride from the toothpaste. Leaving fluoride on the teeth helps to protect them during the day, or in the night.

Use a mouthwash at a different time to toothbrushing (for example, after lunch or after school).

Your child's diet

Teeth start to decay after having food or drink that has sugar in.

Foods with sugar in are:

- biscuits
- sweets
- cakes
- some yoghurts
- some breakfast cereals
- dried fruits and dried fruit bars

Always remember it is **how often** your child has sugary foods and drinks that causes tooth decay. It is not **the amount** of sugary foods they have.

Try to only give sugary foods to your child at mealtimes, and try to only give them water to drink. If your child wants fizzy drinks or flavoured water, only give these at mealtimes.

You **should not** put sweetened drinks in bottles or baby feeders.

Brush your child's teeth after they have had milk to drink. This includes breastmilk, formula, dairy milk and non-dairy milk.

Do not let your child go to sleep with milk left in their mouth. Milk can cause tooth decay if it is left on the teeth overnight.

Tooth-friendly food and drinks for snacks:

- water
- apples and pears
- carrot
- cheese
- breadsticks
- banana
- cucumber
- buttered toast
- grapes
- plain
- rice cakes

Visiting your dentist

Visit your dentist often, at least two times each year.

At about 6 years old, children's first adult teeth grow at the back of their mouth.

Ask your dentist about fissure sealants, which are put on your child's back teeth to help stop tooth decay.

The dentist can also use fluoride varnish to lower the risk of tooth decay. This can be put on by your dentist at least every 6 months.

Remember

Healthy eating and visiting the dentist often means healthy teeth.

More information

BrushDJ is a free, NHS-approved app that makes brushing teeth fun.

web: www.brushdj.com

Aquafresh brush time shows your child fun ways to brush all parts of their teeth. It plays songs while a timer counts down for 2 minutes.

Toothbrushing charts help you keep a diary of when your child brushes their teeth. You can find charts on the websites below.

Child Smile has information about looking after your teeth, and toothbrushing charts.

web: www.child-smile.org.uk

Colgate has information about looking after your teeth, toothbrushing charts and games.

web: www.colgate.com/en-gb/oral-health

nickjr has a Dora the Explorer tooth brushing chart.

web: www.nickjr.co.uk/dora/activities/sbs-brush-chart/

Sesame Street has videos and games about looking after your teeth, **web:**

www.sesamestreetincommunities.org/health

Contact us

If you have any questions about looking after your child's teeth and gums, please contact our department, **phone:** 020 7188 7188, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

For more information on conditions, 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



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