

Importance of Oral Hygiene

Looking After Your Child's Teeth:

From brushing their first tooth to their first trip to the dentist, here's how to take care of your children's teeth.

A regular teeth-cleaning routine is essential for good dental health.

Follow these tips and you can help keep your child's teeth decay-free.



Tooth brushing tips:

It's important to use a fluoride toothpaste as this helps prevent and control tooth decay.

Children aged up to 3 years:

Start brushing your baby's teeth as soon as the first milk tooth breaks through (usually at around 6 months, but it can be earlier or later).

- Parents or carers should brush or supervise tooth brushing.
- Brush teeth twice daily for about 2 minutes with fluoride toothpaste.
- Brush last thing at night before bed and on 1 other occasion.
- Use children's fluoride toothpaste containing no less than 1,000ppm of fluoride (check label) or family toothpaste containing between 1,350ppm and 1,500ppm fluoride.
- Use only a smear of toothpaste.
- Make sure children don't eat or lick toothpaste from the tube.
- Bottles shouldn't be used to give young children sugary drinks as this can lead to a build-up of sugar on the teeth, which can lead to tooth decay.
- From 12 months of age, dummies should be discouraged as prolonged use can cause children to develop an 'open bite' which means the teeth start to move to make way for the dummy. Dummy use beyond this stage may also affect a child's speech and language development.

Children aged 3 to 6 years:

- Brush at least twice daily for about 2 minutes with fluoride toothpaste.
- Brush last thing at night before bed and at least on 1 other occasion.
- Brushing should be supervised by a parent or carer.
- Use children's fluoride toothpaste containing no less than 1,000ppm of fluoride (check label) or family toothpaste containing between 1,350ppm and 1,500ppm fluoride.
- Use only a pea-sized amount of toothpaste.
- Spit out after brushing and don't rinse – if you rinse, the fluoride won't work as well.

Children aged 7 and over:

- Brush at least twice daily for about 2 minutes with fluoride toothpaste.
- Brush last thing at night before bed and at least on 1 other occasion.
- Use fluoride toothpaste containing between 1,350ppm and 1,500ppm of fluoride (check label).
- Spit out after brushing and don't rinse – if you rinse, the fluoride won't work as well.
- Children aged 7 and over should be able to brush their own teeth, but it's still a good idea to watch them to make sure they brush properly and for about 2 minutes.

How to help children brush their teeth properly:

- Guide your child's hand so they can feel the correct movement.
- Use a mirror to help your child see exactly where the brush is cleaning their teeth
- Make tooth brushing as fun as possible by using an egg timer to time it for about 2 minutes. You could also try the <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/brush-dj/>
- Don't let children run around with a toothbrush in their mouth, as they may have an accident and hurt themselves.

Taking your child to the dentist:

- NHS dental care for children is free.
- Take your child to the dentist when their first milk teeth appear. This is so they become familiar with the environment and get to know the dentist. The dentist can advise you on how to prevent decay and identify any oral health problems at an early stage. Just opening up the child's mouth for the dentist to take a look at is useful practise for the future.
- When you visit the dentist, be positive about it and make the trip fun. This will stop your child worrying about future visits.
- Take your child for regular dental check-ups as advised by the dentist

Additional Information**NHS – Children's Teeth**

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-teeth-and-gums/taking-care-of-childrens-teeth/>

**Looking after your baby's teeth**

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/babys-development/teething/looking-after-your-babys-teeth/>