

Healthy mouth, safer swallow

It's as easy as ABC



- **Avoid sugar** – reduce the amount and frequency of food and drinks containing sugar
- **Brush** – thoroughly twice a day
- **Check-ups** – have regular dental appointments – as advised by your dentist

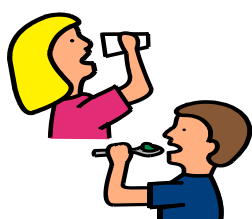
Why is oral health so important?

How can I look after my child's mouth?

By **oral** we mean the **whole mouth, including teeth, gums, lips, tongue and cheeks.**

Oral health means more than just having good teeth. It is a major part of general health and wellbeing.

A healthy mouth is important for your child's development and necessary for many everyday functions, such as:



Eating and
drinking



Laughing and
smiling



Kissing

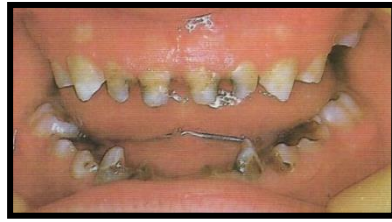


Chatting and
making friends

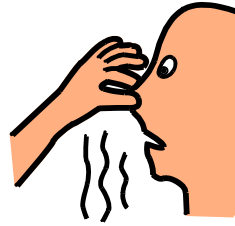
Poor oral health can lead to:



**Pain, infection
and tooth loss**



**Poor
appearance**



Bad breath



Ill health

How can I look after my child's mouth?

Most babies get their first tooth around six months. Some may be as late as a year. Some are even born with one or two.

Some babies have no problems when their teeth come through.

The following may be signs of teething: red sore gums, slightly reddened cheeks, extra dribbling, chewing on anything.

If your child has anything more serious, such as a raised temperature or sickness, this is not from teething and you should seek advice from your doctor.



It is just as important to look after your child's first teeth as it is their adult teeth.

Decayed teeth can cause pain and lead to infection. Infection can lead to serious chest infections (aspiration pneumonia).

An infected first tooth can damage the adult tooth developing underneath. First teeth keep the space for the adult teeth and guide them into position. If any first teeth have to be taken out then this space may be lost. This may cause crowding of the adult teeth.



At around six years, the front teeth (incisors) start to wobble as the adult ones push through. It is at this time that the first adult molar (back) teeth are also due. These appear through the gum behind the last tooth on each side of the top and bottom jaws. These are often not noticed, as they do not replace teeth. It is important to keep them clean, which means brushing a little further back.

Avoid sugar

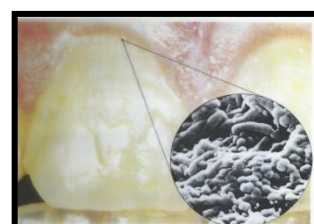
Reduce the amount and frequency of food and drinks containing sugar. Keep them to mealtimes only.

Dental Decay is caused by sugar in the mouth that is broken down by plaque bacteria to form acid, which attacks the teeth.

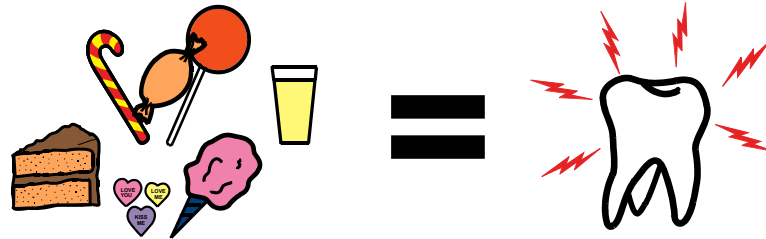
Plaque is the sticky, creamy film of bacteria that continuously forms in the mouth.



Sugar + bacteria = acid
Acid + tooth = decay



The more often sugary foods or drinks are consumed, the higher the risk of decay.



Top tips for decay prevention

- Start as you mean to go on by creating good habits early.
- Avoid giving sweets as treats and rewards. Try a healthy treat, stickers, fun activity or a cuddle.
- Keep sugar, in any form (e.g. glucose, sucrose, fructose, maltose, honey, maltodextrin) to mealtimes only. Always check labels for ingredients.
- Remember that smoothies contain sugar too.
- Start using a cup for drinks at about six months and aim to stop the bottle completely by one year.
- A cup without a lid is ideal. If you use one with a lid, it should be 'free flow' rather than non-spill (valved) so that your child learns to sip instead of sucking. An open cup will support a more mature pattern of drinking.

Dental Erosion is slightly different to dental decay, but just as damaging.

It is the softening of the tooth surface by frequent acid contact and can cause pain and discomfort.

It can be caused by acidic drinks (such as fruit juice and fizzy drinks), acidic foods, and frequent acid reflux or vomiting.

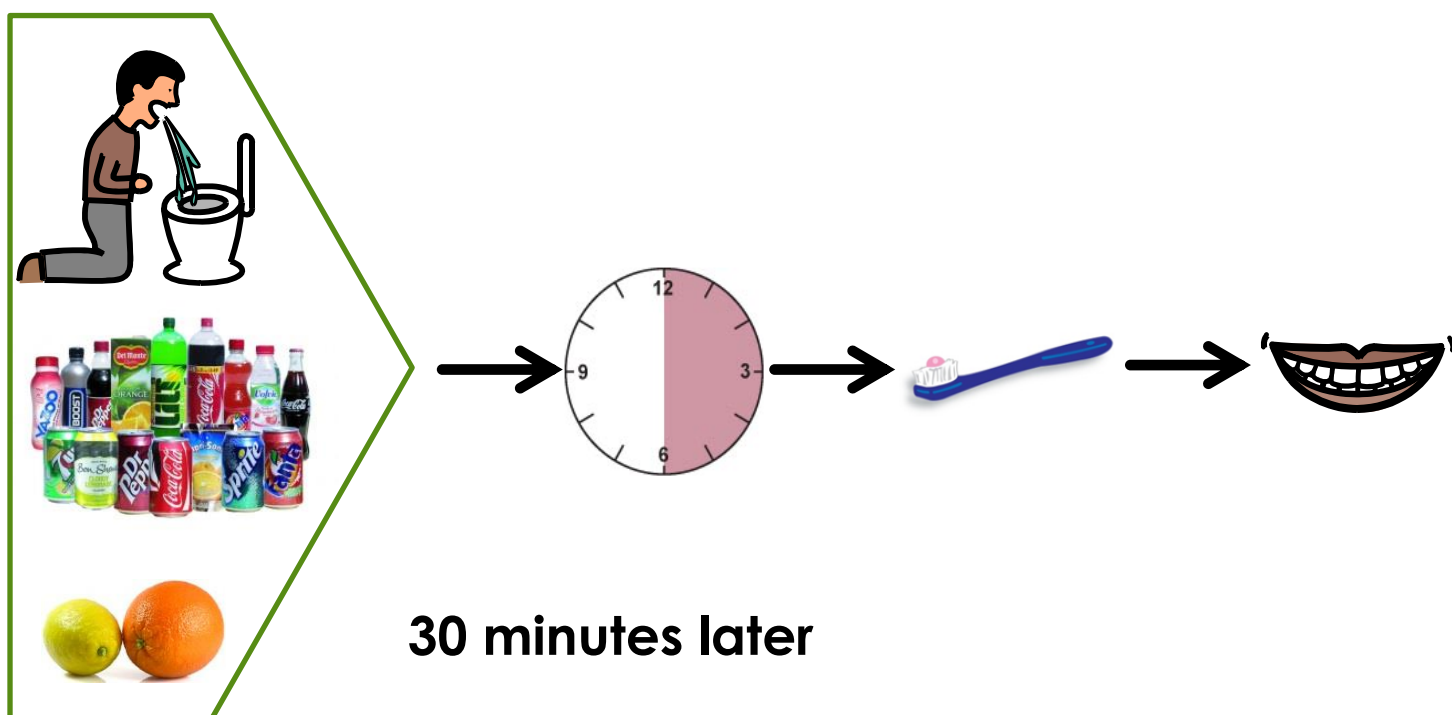
Lemon and glycerine mouth swabs can lead to erosion and should **not** be used.

Saliva helps to neutralize the acid from both the decay process and erosion, but this takes time.

It also helps to harden the softened tooth by replacing minerals removed by acid.

It is important not to brush immediately after acidic foods, drinks or vomiting, as this could remove the softened tooth surface before the saliva can repair it. It is best to wait about 30 minutes.

You could rinse your mouth with water in the meantime, if safe to do so.



Brush twice a day



It is important to start brushing as soon as the first tooth appears. It is good to get your baby used to the feel of the brush in their mouth.

A baby or small child can sit on your lap while you brush their teeth. Brushing after baby's relaxing bath is usually a good time.

Find a tune that they love. Aim to brush thoroughly for around 2 minutes. You could use a timer, or favourite song or an app to help your child with this.



If your child is sensitive to brushing, you could try a massage or training brush.



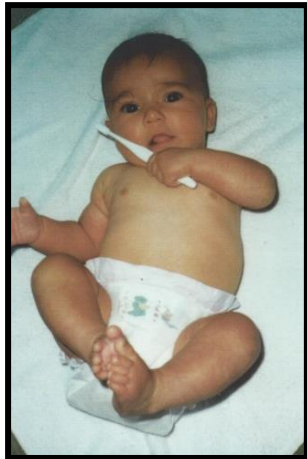
It may take time to get your baby or young child used to brushing, but it will be worth it.

Try to make it a fun part of their morning and bedtime routine.

Babies and young children are natural mimics, so it may help to let them watch you or other family members brush their own teeth.

Young babies are unable to spit, so gently wipe away any excess paste. Brush teeth twice a day and last thing at night and at one other time (ideally in the morning).

All children under 7 need help to brush their teeth. Some children may need help for longer.



It is just as important to brush your child's teeth if they are tube-fed and don't eat or drink anything orally.

It will also help to prevent bad breath and reduce the build-up of hardened plaque (calculus / tartar) on the teeth.

Brush teeth twice a day

- Use a small headed toothbrush with soft bristles for a baby or medium bristles for an older child.
- Use a smear of paste for children under 3 and a pea sized amount for children older than 3.
- Use small circular movements.

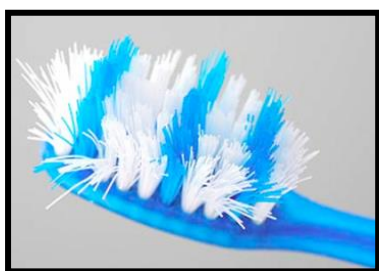


- Brush all surfaces of all the teeth.
- Brush all biting surfaces using a gentle scrubbing action.
- Gently brush the tongue surface from the back to its tip if possible. This will help to remove debris and bacteria and keep your mouth clean and healthy.
- Gently massaging around the mouth may relax lips and cheeks before brushing.
- **After brushing, 'spit don't rinse'**, or wipe the excess with a tissue or flannel. This prolongs the effect of fluoride on the teeth.
- Rinse the toothbrush under clean running water and leave to air dry.
- The child should be sitting with their chin slightly tucked in to help protect the airway. Stand behind and slightly to the side while you brush.
- It can be difficult to brush someone else's teeth, especially if they find it difficult to cope with this. Do the best you can.
Anything is better than nothing.



Helpful hints

Replace your toothbrush regularly (approximately every 3 months) or sooner if the bristles become splayed or become damaged.



Some electric/battery brushes come in different colours and designs and have timers.

If your child struggles with tooth brushing and can only cope for a limited time, you could try a three headed *Dr Barman's 'Superbrush'* that cleans several surfaces at once.



A mouth prop can be helpful if biting the toothbrush is a problem.

Two brushes can be pushed together as a prop to help keep the mouth open.



Plastic finger guards are also available.

These can be used as a prop to keep the mouth open during tooth brushing.



Toothpaste tips

All children should use a fluoride toothpaste. Fluoride helps protect teeth from decay.

Children with special needs are at a higher risk of tooth decay and should use a fluoride toothpaste that contains 1,350 – 1,500 parts per million fluoride (ppm F).



If your child has swallowing difficulties it can help if the toothpaste doesn't foam too much. Use non-foaming toothpaste (without sodium lauryl sulphate) such as Sensodyne Pronamel, Aquafresh Little Teeth or Big Teeth, OraNurse and BioXtra. Some children don't like strong minty flavours or may have a dry mouth.

Recommended toothpaste	Low Foam	Mild Flavour	Dry mouth
Oralieve (prescription)	*	*	*
Sensodyne Pronamel	*		
Sensodyne Daily Care	*		
Aquafresh Little Teeth	*	*	
Aquafresh Big Teeth	*		
BioXtra	*	*	*
Ora Nurse	*	No flavour	

Top tips for dry mouth

Some children with swallowing difficulties may suffer with dry mouth and dry lips, particularly if they breathe through their mouths.

A dry mouth is uncomfortable. Saliva is essential for speech, chewing and swallowing and maintaining a healthy comfortable mouth. Some toothpaste helps to relieve a dry mouth. See toothpaste table.

- Use an oral gel or spray to lubricate a dry mouth.
- Use a soft toothbrush, Mouthcleanser (Mc3), or a gloved finger to gently spread a thin coating around the inside surfaces of the mouth including the tongue.
- This can also help for dry lips.

Avoid petroleum or paraffin based products as these are toxic to the lungs if aspirated.

Examples of oral gels and sprays:

- Oralieve www.oralieve.co.uk or on prescription from your GP
- BioXtra or Biotene from the chemist

Ask your pharmacist for advice.

Mouth Cleansers: Mc3

- These are a safe alternative to foam swabs.
- They are used to remove food debris and mucous from the mouth.
- They are used to freshen and moisten the mouth.
- They can be used to apply oral gel.
- They are not a substitute for toothbrushes and are **not** effective in cleaning teeth.
- They can be used wet or dry.

After use, clean and rinse under cold running water and leave to air dry, discard after 12 hours, or sooner if damaged or full of debris.

These can be purchased online or from NHS supplies.

Check up regularly

Regular dental checks are essential for good oral health.

Between visits, if you think your child experiences pain you don't need to wait for their next appointment, seek advice from your dentist.

If you are unable to access your usual family dentist due to a special need, your child can be referred to the Community Dental Service by any health professional or you can phone for further information.

For further information:

0330 123 9438



Referrals can be sent to:

NHS Dental Services

Capital House

Jubilee Way

Faversham

ME13 8GD



Finally...

Everyone has the right to a clean healthy mouth that is comfortable and pain free. By establishing regular, thorough oral hygiene and following the above advice, this should become routine, familiar and easier to achieve.

Need help?



Our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) can help you.

You can ask a question or tell them if you are unhappy about something.



Phone: 0300 123 1807

The team can phone you back.



Email: kentchft.PALS@nhs.net



Post:

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust
Unit J, Concept Court
Shearway Business Park
Folkestone
Kent CT19 4RG

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