Teeth are very important (even milk teeth)

Although milk teeth are temporary they are just as important as adult teeth because they are used for eating, talking, smiling and to keep the shape of the face. With a healthy diet and proper care, teeth should last a lifetime.

Adult (permanent) teeth can start to come through from as early as 6 years old. From then on at different stages, the baby teeth will be replaced by adult teeth.

Why is it important that I clean my child’s teeth?

It is important to brush teeth and gums twice daily, before bedtime and at one other time during the day to remove plaque (a creamy soft substance that builds up on teeth) and any food stuck on the teeth.
How should I brush my child’s teeth?

To clean the teeth and gums use a pea-sized amount of minty fluoride toothpaste containing no less than 1350 to 1500 parts per million (ppm) for children aged 3 years and upwards. (Look on the toothpaste packaging to find the amount of fluoride).

Use a soft, small headed toothbrush, with gentle brushing movements, making sure all the surfaces of the teeth are cleaned. This should take 2 minutes.

Encourage spitting out after brushing, rather than rinsing with water, this will allow the fluoride to work more effectively.

Try and encourage and praise your child – tooth brushing should be a fun activity. Your child will learn by watching you.

Children under 7 years old should be helped by an adult when brushing their teeth.
Remember
Sugar + Plaque = Acid

The risk of tooth decay increases with the number of times that teeth are exposed to sugar (in both food and drink) each day. This can be reduced by keeping food and drink containing sugar to meal times only.

An ideal snack could be: fresh fruit; raw vegetables; cheese; crackers; toast fingers.

Be aware, in dried fruit the sugar is concentrated and can cause decay, so keep to meal times only.

It is best not to use food, especially sweets, as a treat or reward. Try to encourage an alternative such as: stickers, comics, crayons or an outing to the park.

Water and milk (unsweetened) are the only safe drinks for children’s teeth between meals.

Juices, most squashes and fizzy drinks are acidic and can damage the enamel (hard outer coating) of the teeth. This is called dental erosion. If your child has these drinks they should be well diluted and given at meal times ONLY, to help reduce the risk of dental erosion.

Do not give sugary drinks at or before sleep time.

If medicines are prescribed, ask the pharmacy for a sugar-free version.
My child has a damaged tooth

If a tooth is damaged:

- Calm baby down.
- Clean away any blood with a clean, damp, tissue.
- Stop bleeding by applying steady pressure using a damp handkerchief or kitchen towel for 20 minutes.
- Never try to put a baby tooth back in. Children under 5 years usually only have baby (first) teeth.

Telephone your own doctor immediately if:

- Some or all of the tooth is missing.
- You are worried about your child’s breathing.
- The bleeding does not stop.
Three ways to prevent dental disease

- Brush children’s teeth and gums twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
- Keep sugary foods and drinks to meal times only.
- Visit the dentist regularly.

To find a dentist:
NHS Choices
www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

Insert your postal code to find a list of your local dentists.

A child should go to the dentist at approximately 2 years of age or when they have most of their baby teeth.

They should have a check-up at least once a year. Treatment is free under the NHS for all children.