A guide to Healthy Teeth for your baby

aged 0 to 2 years
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.

When will my baby’s teeth come through?

All babies are different, this is a guide.

A 6-8 months - front teeth (central incisors)
B 6-8 months - front teeth (lateral incisors)
C 12-20 months (canines)
D 12-16 months - back teeth (first molars)
E 20-30 months - back teeth (second molars)

Teething troubles

- Babies can suffer from teething pains. They may get red cheeks, dribble or put their fingers in their mouth.
- Sugar-free liquid paracetamol, teething gels or teething rings can be used to bring some relief. Some teething rings can be cooled in the fridge. You could even gently massage baby’s gums with clean fingers.
- Your baby may need more water to drink when teething. If you are in any doubt about your baby’s symptoms please contact your Health Visitor or GP.
Why is it important that I clean my baby’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 teeth.

At what age should I brush my baby’s teeth?

As soon as the teeth erupt it is important to start brushing them. This is to ensure they are kept clean and healthy but also to get baby used to having their teeth cleaned as part of a daily routine.

- To clean the teeth and gums use a smear of minty fluoride toothpaste containing no less than 1000 parts per million (ppm) for babies aged 0-3 years. Use a soft, small headed toothbrush.

- Use gentle circular movements, making sure all the surfaces of the teeth are cleaned. This will take up to 2 minutes by the time baby has all 20 teeth (at approximately 2½ years).

- Encourage spitting out after brushing, rather than rinsing with water, this will allow the fluoride to work more effectively.
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 are the only safe drinks for children’s teeth between meals. Full fat milk is recommended until 2 years of age.
- Juices and most squashes are acidic and can damage the enamel (hard outer coating) of the teeth. This is called dental erosion. If these are given they should be diluted with lots of water and given in a cup at meal times ONLY.
- Do not give sugary drinks at or before sleep time.
- If medicines are prescribed, ask the pharmacy for a sugar-free version.
Cups, bottles and dummies

When weaning your baby, a cup without a lid is best. It encourages them to move their mouth differently which helps with speech and eating. Try and introduce an open cup from 6 months of age. By one year of age they should no longer use a bottle. Never leave a baby alone when they are eating or drinking.

Try to stop using a dummy by the time baby is about one year old. Do not put anything sweet on dummies.

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.
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 baby’s breathing.
- The bleeding does not stop.

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.