A guide to Healthy Teeth for your baby

aged 0 to 2 years
Top tips for healthy baby teeth:

- Keep sugary foods and drinks to meal times only.
- Do not give sugary drinks at or before bedtime.
- Keep to a minimum the amount of sugar your child eats and drinks each day.
- Brush your child’s teeth and gums twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.
- Take your child to the dentist at approximately two years of age or when they have most of their teeth. They should have a check-up at least once a year.
- Do not put anything sweet on dummies or in your baby’s bottle.

Remember:

Sugar + Plaque = Acid

Keep sugary foods and drinks to meal times only. Your child’s teeth need time to recover. “Acid attacks” can damage the teeth and cause decay.
When will my baby's teeth come through?

All babies are different, this is only a guide:

A. 6-8 months
   (Central Incisors) Front teeth

B. 6-8 months
   (Lateral incisors) Front teeth

C. 12-20 months
   (Canines)

D. 12-16 months
   (First molars) Back teeth

E. 20-30 months
   (Second molars) Back teeth

Teething troubles

- Babies can suffer from teething pains. They may get red cheeks, dribbling, 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 their gums with your clean finger.

- 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, Doctor or NHS Direct.
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. Stop using a dummy or bottle when they are about one year old. Never leave a baby alone when they are eating or drinking.

Safe drinks for baby’s teeth

Water and milk (unsweetened) are the only safe drinks for your child’s teeth between meals. Juices and most squashes are acidic and can damage the enamel (hard outer coating) of the teeth. If these are given, they should be diluted with lots of water (made very weak), and given only at meal times, in a cup.

Check out the labels

Sugar is added to many foods and drinks. Look at the labels on foods and drinks under ‘Carbohydrate - Sugars’, 1 teaspoon is about 5 grammes. Look out for hidden sugars such as fructose, dextrose, glucose, sucrose, honey and syrup. Try to avoid giving food and drinks containing sweeteners, such as aspartame or saccharin, as maximum recommended levels can easily be exceeded.

Safe snacks

In between meals safe snacks for your child’s teeth include - chopped fruit and vegetables, bread/toast fingers, crackers and cheese. For more information of suitable foods for a healthy diet for your child contact your health visitor.

Treats for your child

It is best not to use food (including sweets) as a treat - food should not be identified with rewards.
Why is it important that my teeth are cleaned?

It is important to clean your baby’s teeth and gums in the morning and at night, to remove plaque (a creamy coloured, soft deposit that builds up on the teeth) and any food stuck in the teeth. Try to encourage and praise your child - tooth brushing should be a fun activity. Your child will learn by watching you.

At what age should my teeth start to be cleaned?

Even before any teeth have come through you can still clean the gums. It is important to get your baby used to having their teeth cleaned as part of a daily routine.

- To clean the teeth and gums use a tiny smear of fluoride toothpaste containing approximately 1000ppm fluoride* on a soft, small headed toothbrush. (The fluoride amount can be found on the back of the toothpaste packaging).
- Use gentle circular movements, making sure all the surfaces of the teeth are cleaned.
- Any excess toothpaste can be cleaned away by using some water on the brush.

*If the area you live in has fluoride added to the drinking water a children’s toothpaste with lower levels of fluoride is recommended. Ask your dentist or NHS Direct if you are not sure.
I’ve damaged my 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 NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 immediately if:

• some or all of the tooth is missing
• you are worried about your baby’s breathing
• the bleeding does not stop

I can’t find a dentist to look at my teeth

If you cannot find a dentist call NHS Direct on 0845 46 47. They will have an up-to-date list of dentists taking on NHS patients.

Written by the Oral Health Promotion Team, Milton Keynes Primary Care Trust, and partly funded by SureStart Local Programme - Milton Keynes.

Part of the information contained in this leaflet is based on the book by Levine R S Shilman-Lowe CR. The Scientific Basis of Oral Health Education.