A guide to Healthy Teeth for your child aged 3 to 5 years
Top tips for health

• 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 regularly. They should have a check-up at least once a year.

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.
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. (All children are different - this is only a guide.)

Teeth are very important

Teeth 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.
Do you want to know more?

Safe drinks for your child’s teeth

Water and milk (unsweetened) are the only safe drinks for your child’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 these drinks are given to your child they should be diluted with lots of water (made very weak), and given only at meal times.

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 with sweeteners in, such as aspartame or saccharin, as maximum recommended levels can easily be exceeded.

Packed lunches

It is recommended that children eat five portions of fruit or vegetables per day. Try not to pack foods that have a lot of sugar in them.

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 the teeth and gums twice a day, in the morning and at night, to remove plaque (a creamy coloured, soft deposit that builds up on the teeth) and any food stuck on the teeth. Try to 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.

How should my teeth be cleaned?

- To clean the teeth and gums use a pea-sized amount 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. This should take two to three minutes.

- Encourage your child to spit out after brushing

- Do not rinse your child’s mouth out.

*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 the child 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 immediately if:

- some or all of the tooth is missing
- you are worried about your child’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.

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