A guide to Healthy Teeth for your school-aged child aged 5 to 12 years
Teeth are very important

They are used for eating, talking, smiling and to keep the shape of the face. Having a healthy smile will help to give your child more confidence.

It is essential to clean the teeth and gums twice daily, before bedtime and at least one other time during the day, to remove plaque (a creamy coloured, soft deposit that builds up on the teeth) and any food stuck on the teeth.

- Brush your child’s teeth and gums with a pea-sized amount of family fluoride toothpaste containing 1350ppm to 1500ppm fluoride on a soft, small headed toothbrush. (The amount of fluoride can be found on the back of the toothpaste packaging). They will need help with brushing until they are at least seven years old, however brushing alone will not prevent tooth decay.

- Keep sugary foods and drinks to meal times only. Sugar causes far less damage to teeth if consumed at mealtimes.

- Do not give sugary drinks at or before bedtime.

- Keep to a minimum the amount of sugar your child eats and drinks each day.

- Take your child for regular dental check-ups at least once a year or as often as your dentist advises.
Why teeth

At school

A child's first day at school is closely followed by the gradual loss of milk teeth and the appearance of adult teeth. With a healthy diet and proper care, teeth should last a lifetime.

Research has shown that tooth decay increases with the number of times that sugar (in both food and drink) is consumed each day. So, how can you cut down on the amount and the number of times your child has sugar?

- An ideal snack is either fresh fruit or raw vegetables (avoid giving dried fruit as a snack).
- Schools will allow water to be drunk if children are thirsty.
- If your child has to take medicines or cough lozenges then try to obtain the sugar-free varieties.
- When meeting your child after school try not to offer sweets; it is much better to allow your child to eat these immediately after their evening meal.
- It is best not to use food (including sweets) as a treat or reward particularly when celebrating special occasions such as birthdays, try to think of alternative ideas to sweets - why not give stickers, comics, crayons or donate a book to the school library?
Do you want to know more?

Question

Do all children see a dentist while they are at school?

Answer: Not all children will see a dentist at school although a dentist may come to the school to examine specific age groups occasionally, therefore it is important to take your child to their family dentist for regular check-ups.

Oral Health Promoters may visit schools to work with teachers on projects in line with the National Curriculum and develop resources which give advice and information to the pupils and parent groups.

Remember

When sugar enters the mouth it mixes with plaque (germs) and forms an acid.

Sugar + Plaque = Acid

“Acid attacks” can damage the teeth and cause DECAY. Your child’s teeth need time to recover. Keep sugary foods and drinks to meal times only.
Packed lunches for your child

It is recommended that children eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. Try not to pack foods that contain a lot of sugar.

Include in your child’s lunchbox each day some of the following:

- **plenty of fruit and vegetables**: a small apple or satsuma, a handful of cherry tomatoes or grapes, carrot sticks (an ideal time to eat dried fruit is at lunchtime).

- **dairy food**: yoghurt, fromage frais, a piece of cheese, semi-skimmed milk.

- **a portion of starchy food**: a wholegrain bap or roll, thick sliced wholemeal bread, chapatti or pitta bread and rice or pasta salad.

- **a portion of protein**: lean meat, fish, chicken, tuna, egg or hummus.

- **a drink**: fruit juice, milk or water (avoid including fizzy drinks).
Dental injuries

Dentists strongly recommend the wearing of a gum shield to help protect teeth when playing sport that involves physical contact, speed or moving objects. Gum shields can be obtained from sports shops but your local dentist will be able to make one that is specially fitted for your child. Cycle accidents often involve damage to the teeth, for protection always make sure your child wears a helmet when riding a bicycle.

What to do if an adult tooth is knocked out?
- pick it up by the crown (not the root).
- if the tooth is dirty, rinse in milk or under running water (do not use disinfectant).
- push the tooth gently back into place (making sure it is the correct way round).
- keep the tooth in place by getting your child to bite on a clean handkerchief.
- contact your child’s dentist or go to your hospital A&E department.

What to do if the tooth cannot be re-implanted?
- apply pressure to the area immediately.
- store the tooth in cold, fresh milk.
- prevent the child from drinking or eating anything hot or cold.
- go immediately to a dentist or your hospital A&E department.

Remember, never try to put a baby (first) tooth back in place!

If you cannot find a dentist call NHS Direct on 0845 4647

For out-of-hours emergency dental treatment contact: