In the beginning

Teeth are important for eating and talking and good teeth also help a child to have an attractive confident smile.

Good dental habits, started early, can help children keep their teeth for life.

A baby’s first teeth are forming before birth. They begin to appear around 6 months, often in the lower jaw at the front. A few babies are born with teeth and others may still be waiting for teeth on their first birthday. Whenever they appear, that’s when you need to start looking after them.

**Toothbrushing**

Why is brushing important?

- In early years fluoride in toothpaste helps prevent cavities - tooth decay.
- In later years regular brushing helps prevent gum disease.

When should brushing start?

- Just after your child’s first teeth come through.

How should the teeth be brushed?

- Use a small headed brush with a smear of fluoride toothpaste.
• Brush gently on the outside, inside and biting sides of the teeth using a gentle scrubbing action.

• Once a full set of baby teeth are through it’s important to make sure you clean the teeth right at the back.

• It’s a good idea to help children brush their teeth up to the age of six or seven.

Standing behind your child with their head tucked into you may make cleaning their teeth easier.

**When should the teeth be brushed?**

Children’s teeth should be brushed twice a day, after breakfast and last thing at night.

• Encourage your children with novelty toothbrushes, children’s fluoride toothpaste (which is milder tasting), and by letting them see the rest of the family brushing their teeth.

**Drinks and snacks**

• Sugars in food and drink cause tooth decay.

• Bacteria in our mouths convert sugar into acid which rots teeth.

• It’s not just the amount of sugar consumed that is important but how often sugary foods and drinks are consumed.

• Scottish children consume a lot of sweets, sugary foods and sweet fizzy drinks and have poor teeth as a result.

**What can you do?**

• Cut down on the number of times a day your child has sugary foods and drinks.

• Check food and drink labels for added sugar. Sugar is also called sucrose, dextrose, glucose, fructose, maltose and syrup eg: fruit syrup, on labels.