Tiny teeth!

A five-minute guide to healthy teeth for the under fives.
Toothy tips for tiny tots

A happy child with a sunny smile is what every parent wants to see.

Good teeth help your child feel confident but tooth decay can cause pain and worry, even in small children.

When it comes to children's teeth, regular brushing and dentist visits are not the only answers.

What, when and how your child eats and drinks is also important and this booklet gives simple facts on how you can keep your little ones grinning from ear to ear.

It's a toddler!

First steps

Tooth decay is caused when bacteria in the mouth feed on the sugars which are left behind after eating. The acid the bacteria produce causes damage to teeth, leading to decay.

You can help to protect small childrens' teeth from decay by limiting the amount of sugary foods and drinks that they eat. Sugary foods and drinks are best left for meal-times rather than between meals.

It's also important to make sure that children never have sugary foods and drinks at bedtime or after they have brushed their teeth at the end of the day. A sugary drink last thing at night will make acid attacks and tooth decay much more likely.
**Erosion explosion**

Tooth erosion can also be a big problem for tiny teeth. This is when the surface of the tooth is slowly worn away by acidic foods and drinks.

Fizzy soft drinks and fruit juices are the biggest culprits in the erosion explosion. Even low-sugar and diet drinks are acidic.

To help avoid tooth erosion, don’t offer children too many acidic drinks. Just like the rule with sugary drinks – acidic drinks are best left for meal times rather than between meals.

Remember, fruit juices, squashes and other soft drinks should be diluted for young children. This makes them less acidic or sugary, so they will be less likely to cause tooth erosion or decay.

**Some golden rules**

Sugary drinks and snacks between meals can harm teeth – and mean that there is less room for nutritious food.

Discourage your little one from swishing drinks around their mouth. This makes tooth erosion much more likely.

If they are thirsty at bedtime offer a glass of milk or water. Never give children sugary food and drink just before bed.

Milk and water are best for teeth.
Toothpaste power!

Take care of tiny teeth

For a sweet smile, brush teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste* and discourage a sweet tooth.

Secret sugar

Dentists say that water and milk are the best drinks for teeth and the only safe drinks between meals. Avoid acidic drinks like fruit juice, squash and fizzy drinks outside meal times. Try sugar-free alternatives like cheese and plain yogurt, instead of sweet biscuits.

Sugar comes in many different disguises so check labels for:

- sucrose
- fructose
- maltodextrin
- glucose
- maltose and honey.

Sweet, sharp snacks mean tooth decay attacks

* see page 18
Smiles of snack ideas

Introduce some tooth-friendly snacks:

- Peeled and chopped fruit and vegetables
- Plain yogurt with added fruit
- Crumpets, toast fingers and cheese spread
- Homemade plain popcorn
- Chapatti, pitta bread, potato cakes, matzos and rice cakes
- Plain biscuits like water biscuits and cream crackers
- A stick of cheese.

Healthy bites for growing mites

Milky goodness

As well as being kind to teeth, milk provides much more, especially for young children.

- It has protein for growth and repair.
- It contains calcium, essential for strong bones.
- It provides energy and lots of vitamins.
- It contains phosphorus, zinc, magnesium and iodine.

Did you know?
Free milk is available to nursery schools and families on Income Support or Jobseekers’ Allowance. For an information booklet, call The Dairy Council on 020 7499 7822.