

Breastfeeding and dental health



Information for patients, parents and carers

Salaried Dental Service
www.healthyteethdevon.nhs.uk

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net.

Breastfeeding

- Breastmilk provides all the energy and nutrients needed for the first 6 months of life.
- Breastmilk continues to provide up to half or more of a child's nutritional needs between the ages of 6 and 12 months.
- Breastmilk can provide up to a third of a child's nutritional needs during the second year of life.
- Introducing your baby to solid food starts when your baby is around 6 months old. Your baby should be introduced to a varied diet, alongside their usual breast milk or first infant formula.
- Current evidence suggests that breastfeeding up to 12 months of age is associated with a decreased risk of tooth decay.
- When breastfeed beyond two years of age, there is some evidence that the breastfeeding along with excess sugars in food may cause tooth decay.
- However, to wean from the breast due to fears about tooth decay would deny the baby and mother of the many benefits of continued breastfeeding and may result in unnecessary introduction of a bottle.



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What can cause tooth decay

- Bacteria and food can cause tooth decay. A clear, sticky substance called plaque is always forming on your teeth and gums. Plaque contains bacteria that feed on the sugars in the food you eat, as the bacteria feed they make acids that can wear away the tooth enamel and cause holes (cavities) in the teeth.



What you can do to help your baby/child avoid tooth decay

- Eat sugary foods and drinks less frequently, particularly if breastfeeding beyond the age of 2 years.
- Brush teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste, especially just before bed.
- Introduce an open top or free-flow cup from six months.
- Be careful about oral hygiene (eg not sharing food, toothbrushes or cutlery).
- If your baby/child uses a dummy, avoid cleaning or moistening it with your mouth, as bacteria from your mouth will end up in the baby/child's mouth.

Sugar free medicines

Unfortunately some medicines contain sugar, which can cause tooth decay if given frequently for long periods of time.

Check with your doctor or pharmacist to see if a sugar-free alternative is available.

If possible, give medicines at mealtimes and **not** last thing at night.

Visit your dentist regularly

It is important for you and your baby (before the age of one) to visit your dentist at least once a year. The dentist will check your teeth and gums to make sure they are healthy.

To find a local NHS dentist, call 03330 063 300 or 01392 822348, or email accessdentalhelpline@nhs.net

Useful contacts

Exeter NHS Dental Access Centre

RD & E Hospital (Heavitree)
Gladstone Road
Exeter
EX1 2ED
Tel: 01392 405700
Fax: 01392 405703

Barnstaple NHS Dental Access Centre

Barnstaple Health Centre
Vicarage Street
Barnstaple
EX32 7BH
Tel: 01271 370562
Fax: 01271 341560

References

bspd.co.uk/Dental-Check-by-One

www.dentalhealth.org

www.nct.org.uk

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

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Tell us about your experience of our services. Share your feedback on the Care Opinion website www.careopinion.org.uk.

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