

Looking after your baby's teeth

Information for patients, parents and carers

Other formats

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Teething

Teething normally starts at about six months and continues until three years old but this can vary.

Babies can have problems with teething. They may drool more than usual, and not sleep well. If your child is uncomfortable when they are teething, offer them a cold teething ring or cold, clean wash cloth. If they have a fever, you can consult a doctor or health visitor.



Healthy teeth

Breast feeding exclusively for six months provides the best nutrition for babies. The World Health Organisation recommends breastfeeding to continue beyond 6 months along with the introduction of appropriate solid food. Alternatively, parents may decide to bottle feed their baby using formula or breastmilk.



You should not give a bottle to your baby for long periods or allow them to fall asleep with it. Do not put any sugary drinks or fruit juice in the bottle.

'Avoid leaving the bottle during the night'

From six months your baby should be introduced to drinking from a cup. Use non-valve, free-flowing cups containing only breast or formula milk, or plain water.

Bottle feeding should be discouraged from one year onwards.

No sugar or salt should be added to your baby's food.

Brushing baby's teeth

Start brushing your baby's teeth as soon as the first teeth come through.

Brush the baby's teeth when he/she is lying down or sitting in their chair to allow you to see better (see picture).



(used with permission by NSW Department of Health, Sydney)

Do not wet the toothbrush before cleaning as this dilutes the toothpaste.

Children aged up to three years old should use a toothpaste containing at least 1000ppm of fluoride but use only a smear on the brush. **Do not let your child eat toothpaste.** Ensure that toothpaste is kept out of reach of young children.

Brush the teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste when your baby is relaxed. Brushing last thing at night can help protect the teeth as fluoride in the toothpaste continues to work when your baby is asleep.

‘Brush last thing at night and one other time with a fluoride toothpaste’

Tips

- Do not share toothbrushes.
- Replace the toothbrush when it shows signs of wear or every three months.

Food and drink

- Lots of sugar in our diet comes from biscuits, cakes, sweets, chocolate, drinks and breakfast cereals.
- Acid is produced by bacteria in dental plaque when sugar is present, and it may cause holes to form in the teeth. It is important that you reduce how often your baby has sugary food or drinks.
- It is better not to add sugar or salt to baby’s food. Sugar can damage teeth.
- Even the ‘no added sugar’, low sugar or natural fruit juices can still decay teeth. These should not be added to a baby’s bottle or cup. Fizzy drinks should be avoided as they can cause decay and also dissolve the tooth’s surface (erosion).

Dummies

Dummies can cause the teeth to grow out of line. If used, orthodontic dummies are preferable. Never dip the dummy into anything sweet.

Read food labels

The kinds of sugar to avoid on labels are glucose, fructose, maltose, sucrose, maltodextrin and honey. Try to keep these to mealtimes.

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 to visit your dentist at least once a year. They will check your teeth and gums to make sure they are healthy. Parents are encouraged to start dental visits as soon as their baby's first teeth come through.



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

Useful contact

Exeter NHS Dental Access Centre

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

Barnstaple NHS Dental Access Centre

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

Web: www.healthyteethdevon@nhs.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.

Have your say

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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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