

How to look after your child's teeth and gums

Information for patients, parents and carers

This leaflet explains how to care for your child's oral health. If you have any questions, please speak to the dentist looking after your child.

Toothbrushing

Teeth and gums should be brushed twice a day. Once in the morning, and once at night before bed. This can help stop tooth decay and keep the gums healthy. Brush all the surfaces of the teeth (including where the teeth meet the gums) for at least 2 minutes. Use a timer or song to count down the time. It's best to help or watch your child brush their teeth until they are at least 7 years old.

Toothpaste

- Children **0 to 3 years old** should use a smear of toothpaste. This is about the size of a grain of rice.
- Children **over 3 years old** should use a pea-size amount of toothpaste.

Toothpaste with fluoride helps to keep the teeth and gums healthy. The level of fluoride is on the toothpaste label, or on the packet.

- Children **0 to 3 years old** should use toothpaste with a fluoride level of at least 1,000ppm. If your child is at risk of tooth decay, your dentist may recommend toothpaste with a fluoride level of 1,350ppm to 1,500ppm.
- Children **over 3 years old** should use toothpaste with a fluoride level of 1,350ppm to 1,500ppm.

Spit the toothpaste out after brushing. Do not rinse with water, because this will wash away the fluoride from the toothpaste. Leaving fluoride on the teeth helps to protect them during the day, or in the night.

Children **over 8 years old** can use a fluoride mouthwash (0.05%). Make sure to use this at a different time to toothbrushing (for example, after lunch or after school).

Your child's diet

Teeth start to decay after having food or drink that has sugar in.

Examples of sugary foods include:

- biscuits
- sweets
- cakes
- some yoghurts
- some breakfast cereals
- dried fruits and dried fruit bars

Always remember it is **how often** your child has sugary foods and drinks that causes tooth decay. It is **not the amount** of sugary foods they have. Try to only give sugary foods to your child at mealtimes, and try to only give them water to drink. If your child wants fizzy drinks or flavoured water on a special occasion, only give these at mealtimes.

You **should not** put sweetened drinks in bottles or baby feeders.

Brush your child's teeth after they have had milk to drink. This includes breastmilk, formula, dairy milk and non-dairy milk. Do not let your child go to sleep with milk left in their mouth. Milk can cause tooth decay if it is left on the teeth overnight.

What are some tooth-friendly snacks and drinks?

- water
- fresh fruit, for example, apples, pears, bananas
- fresh vegetables, for example, carrot sticks, cucumber
- cheese
- breadsticks
- buttered toast
- plain crackers or rice cakes
- savoury sandwiches

Visiting your dentist

Visit your dentist often, at least twice a year. At around 6 years old, children's first adult teeth grow at the back of their mouth. Ask your dentist about fissure sealants, which are put on your child's back teeth to help stop tooth decay. The dentist can also use fluoride varnish to lower the risk of tooth decay. This can be put on by your dentist at least every 6 months.

More information

BrushDJ is a free, NHS-approved app that makes brushing teeth fun.

www.brushdj.com

Aquafresh brush time shows your child fun ways to brush all parts of their teeth. It plays songs while a timer counts down for 2 minutes.

www.aquafresh.com/en-gb/about-us/aqf-app/

Toothbrushing charts help you keep a diary of when your child brushes their teeth. You can find charts on the websites below.

Child Smile has information about looking after your teeth, and toothbrushing charts.

www.child-smile.org.uk

Colgate has information on looking after your teeth, toothbrushing charts and games.

www.colgate.com/en-gb/oral-health

Sesame Street has videos and games about looking after your teeth,

www.sesamestreetincommunities.org/health

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about the information in this leaflet, please contact the Department of Paediatric Dentistry team. If your child has persistent bleeding, severe swelling or severe pain, please contact us. If out of hours or at weekends, please call NHS 111 or attend your local A&E department for advice.

Central Referral Office	020 3299 4988
Clinic Appointments	020 3299 3055
Secretary	020 3299 3375
	020 3299 4983

The contents of this leaflet have been adapted for use with permission from the Department of Paediatric Dentistry in Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.kch.nhs.uk/patientsvisitors/patients/leaflets

Sharing your information

We have teamed up with Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas'. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams. The PALS office is located on the ground floor of the Hambleton Wing, near the main entrance on Bessemer Road - staff will be happy to direct you.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS

Tel: 020 3299 3601

Email: kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Communications and Interpreting telephone line on 020 3299 4826 or email kch-tr.accessibility@nhs.net