

# Child Oral Health

**Patient Information Leaflet**

**This leaflet explains more about Child Oral Health and aims to help you look after your child's mouth and teeth.**

**If you have any further questions, please speak to the dentist looking after your child.**

There are three main areas to think about...

## 1. Diet

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### Tooth Decay

- **Sugar** causes tooth decay
- **How often** you eat or drink sugary things affects tooth decay not the quantity of sugar consumed.
- **Many liquid medicines contain sugar.**

### Acid Erosion

- Acidic foods (e.g. sour crisps, fizzy sweets) and drinks (e.g. juice, fizzy drinks) cause tooth erosion (wear).
- A worn tooth surface does not grow back.

### What can I do?

- Stop bottle feeding by one year.
- Start using a drinking cup at six months.
- Keep sugary and acidic foods and drinks to mealtimes.
- Read the food / drink packaging to check if it has sugar in it.
- Give sweets / chocolates / cakes / biscuits only as a treat.
- Only drink water or plain milk between meals.
- Choose sugar free liquid medicines when required.
- Remember that many flavoured and low fat products often have a lot of added sugar in them.

## Sugar free snack ideas

- Savoury sandwiches e.g. cheese, tuna, chicken, egg and cress
- Carrot / cucumber sticks
- Fresh vegetables
- Bread sticks
- Bread rolls / pitta bread / chapattis / toast
- Unsweetened crackers
- Natural yoghurt
- Peanut butter
- Plain houmous

## 2. Tooth brushing

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Tooth brushing serves two important purposes:

1. To **remove dental plaque** from the teeth which reduces the growth of bacteria that cause gum disease and tooth decay.
2. To **apply fluoride** to the teeth – the active ingredient in tooth paste which strengthens the teeth against tooth decay.

### What can I do?

- Brush your child's teeth twice a day (morning and at bedtime) as soon as teeth start appearing in the mouth
- Brush last thing before bed and only drink water after this if thirsty.
- Brush the teeth and gums for at least two minutes – a timer can help.
- Supervise brushing until your child is at least seven years or older if they are not able to brush well themselves.

- Use a soft toothbrush with a small head.
- After brushing, spit out but do not rinse with water or mouthwash afterwards. This keeps the benefits of the fluoride acting on the tooth for longer.
- If a mouthwash is used, use it at a different time to tooth brushing e.g. after school.
- Avoid brushing straight after eating / drinking because the acids and sugars in the diet temporarily soften the enamel (hard outer layer) of teeth.
- Brush with a toothpaste containing:

<p><b>1000 ppm fluoride</b> if your child is <b>under 3 years</b></p>	<p><b>1450 ppm fluoride</b> if your child is <b>over 3 years</b></p>
 <p><b>Smear</b> of toothpaste</p>	 <p><b>Pea sized amount</b></p>

## 3. Visiting the Dentist

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- Take your child to the dentist at least twice a year as soon as the first tooth appears.
- Your dentist will help you identify areas of your child's diet and brushing habits that could be improved
- Your dentist will also advise if your child would benefit from:
  - A special type of toothpaste.
  - A fluoride mouthwash.
  - Fluoride varnish – applied to the teeth.
  - Sealants – applied to adult molars
  - Seeing them more regularly than six monthly.

### What now?

We will discuss all appropriate treatment options with you and encourage you to ask any questions you may have.

We often seek the opinion of other specialist dentists to ensure we are continuing to provide your child with a high standard of care.

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

### Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about this, please contact the paediatric dental team on 020 8672 1255 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)

## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111



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