

Child Oral Health

This leaflet explains 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

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

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:

1000 ppm fluoride if your child is
under 3 years old



Smear of toothpaste

1450 ppm fluoride if your child is
over 3 years old



Pea sized amount

3. Visiting the Dentist

- 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

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS UK

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

Web: 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

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



Reference: DEN_COH_04 **Published:** January 2025 **Review date:** January 2027