

# Caring for your child's teeth

## Diet and teeth

- Stop bottle feeding by 18 months.
- Avoid giving the bottle overnight.
- Only put plain milk or water in the bottle.
- Avoid adding sugar to weaning foods.
- Give sugar free snacks (breadsticks, crackers, rice cakes and cheese).
- Avoid sugary snacks (cakes, biscuits, chocolates and sweets). Limit to special occasions.
- Sugar free squash has hidden sugars.
- Only drink plain water or milk between meals.



## Six steps to healthy teeth

1. Avoid sugary snacks and drinks between meals
2. Avoid giving a bottle overnight – if this is not possible, fill the bottle with water only
3. Brush teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste
4. Supervise your child's brushing until 7 years old and encourage spitting without rinsing
5. Register your child with a dentist for regular check ups
6. Ask for sugar-free medicines if possible

### AND REMEMBER...

It is normal for teeth to look different in the area of the cleft. It is important to keep the teeth clean and decay-free. Your orthodontist will assess the position of your child's teeth and treat them when the time is right.

**If you have any concerns about your child's teeth, please contact your family dentist or the dental team at GOSH on 020 7829 8614**

- Dilute pure fruit juices with water as the acids in fruit juice may damage teeth.
- Avoid fizzy drinks (regular and diet) including fizzy flavoured water, as these can damage teeth.
- Only give water after tooth brushing before bed.

## What about sugar in medication?

- Ask your doctor if there is a sugar free alternative.

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 Compiled by the Cleft Team (Maxillofacial and Dental Department) in collaboration with the Child and Family Information Group. Information in this leaflet has been based on advice from the Department of Health:  
[www.pcc.nhs.uk/delivering-better-oral-health-preventive-toolkit](http://www.pcc.nhs.uk/delivering-better-oral-health-preventive-toolkit)

Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust  
 Great Ormond Street  
 London WC1N 3JH  
[www.gosh.nhs.uk](http://www.gosh.nhs.uk)



Information for families

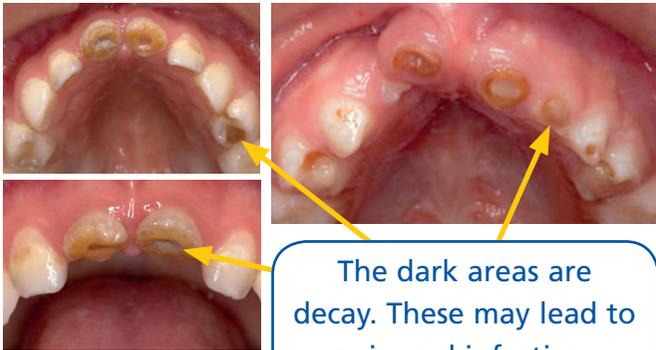
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## Why do we need to brush teeth?

Failure to maintain good mouth hygiene will lead to unhealthy gums, tooth decay, pain and infection. A decayed tooth will require a filling or it may need to be extracted.

When **plaque** mixes with **sugar** (from the food we eat), it produces **acid**. This causes **decay**, or 'holes' in the teeth.

**Plaque** is a white sticky layer of bacteria which coats the teeth.



## What makes decay more likely?

- Frequent daily sugar intake (food, drinks or medicines).
- Having sugary food, drinks or medicines last thing at night after toothbrushing.
- Not brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
- Bottle feeding for a prolonged time, **especially overnight**.
- Not visiting the dentist for regular check-ups and fluoride varnish application at least twice a year.
- A dry mouth.

## Can decay be prevented?

### YES...

- Brush twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.
- Reduce the amount and frequency of sugars in diet.
- Ask your dentist about fluoride varnish. This is like 'super strength' toothpaste.
- Your child may benefit from plastic coatings on the back adult teeth.

## When should I start brushing my child's teeth?

As soon as the first baby tooth appears.



This is a healthy mouth. You may notice that a tooth is missing in the cleft site

Teeth can appear abnormal in the area of the cleft. They may not be 'straight' and they may be a different size or shape. You may also notice missing teeth or extra teeth in this area.

## Brushing my child's teeth

- Encourage your child to spit the toothpaste and don't rinse with water after brushing.
- Supervise your child's tooth brushing until at least seven years of age.
- Spend extra time brushing teeth in the cleft area. Crowded teeth are more likely to collect plaque.
- Use a small head tooth brush or ask your dentist for a specialist brush if access is limited.

## Make it fun.

- Use a colourful soft toothbrush and encourage your child to help with brushing.
- Use a brushing app to help your child brush for two minutes.



**Brush twice a day**  
Morning and evening



## Fluoride toothpaste

- Fluoride helps prevent decay

**Look at the information on the toothpaste tube for the fluoride concentration.** This is usually written as "ppm" which means "parts per million"

### ■ Under 3 years:

Use a smear of paste with 1000ppm fluoride



### ■ Over 3 years:

Use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste with 1350 to 1500ppm fluoride.

