



PROTECTING YOUR CHILD'S TEETH

Establishing good eating habits by limiting sugary snacks and drinks can help your child avoid tooth decay.

Regular visits to the dentist at an early age should also be encouraged. It's important to teach your child how to clean their teeth properly and regularly. Children should still brush their teeth twice a day, especially before bedtime. Your dentist can show you how to do this.

Younger children should use a children's toothpaste, but make sure to read the label about how to use it.

LOOKING AFTER YOUR BABY'S TEETH

You can start brushing your baby's teeth as soon as they start to come through. Use a baby toothbrush with a tiny smear of fluoride toothpaste.

Don't worry if you don't manage to brush much at first. The important thing is to get your baby used to brushing their teeth as part of their daily routine. You can help by setting a good example and letting them see you brushing your own teeth.

Tooth brushing tips for babies:

- use a tiny smear of toothpaste for babies and toddlers up to 3 years old, and a pea-sized amount for children aged 3 to 6 years
- gradually start brushing your child's teeth more thoroughly, covering all the surfaces of the teeth - do it at least twice a day - just before bed and at another time that fits in with your routine
- not all children like having their teeth brushed, so you may have to keep trying. Make it into a game, or brush your own teeth at the same time and then help your child finish their own.
- The easiest way to brush a baby's teeth is to sit them on your knee, with their head resting against your chest. With an older child, stand behind them and tilt their head backwards.
- Brush the teeth in small circles, covering all the surfaces, and encourage your child to spit the toothpaste out afterwards. There's no need to rinse with water, as this will wash away the fluoride.
- Supervise brushing to make sure your child gets the right amount of toothpaste and they're not eating or licking toothpaste from the tube.
- Carry on helping your child brush their teeth until you're sure they can do it well enough themselves. This will normally be until they're at least 7.

TAKING YOUR BABY TO THE DENTIST



At Green Room Dentistry, dental health reviews for children up to the age of 5 are free when attending with a parent, grandparent or sibling. Most of the children and young adults we look after are on Denplan for Children to budget for ongoing care.

Take your child with you when you go for your own dental appointments so they get used to the idea. We see our patient's children from just a few month's old and they generally giggle and let us have a peep at their new teeth.

SUGAR AND TOOTH DECAY

Sugar causes tooth decay. It's not just about the amount of sugar in sweet food and drinks, but how long and how often the teeth are in contact with sugar.

Lollipops and sweet drinks in a formula bottle are particularly damaging, because they bathe the teeth in sugar for long periods of time. The acid in drinks like fruit juice and squash can harm teeth as well. The sugars found naturally in whole fruit and milk are less likely to cause tooth decay, so you don't need to cut down on these types of sugars.

How to cut down sugar in your child's diet

These tips will help you reduce the amount of sugar in your child's diet and prevent tooth decay:

- Avoid sugar-sweetened drinks – the best drinks for young children are their usual milk and water.
- It's OK to use bottles for expressed breast milk, formula milk, or cooled boiled water. But using them for juices or sugary drinks can increase tooth decay.
- From 6 months old, you can offer babies drinks in a non-valved free-flowing cup.
- When your baby starts eating solid foods, encourage them to eat savoury food and drinks with no sugar. Check if there's sugar in pre-prepared baby foods (including the savoury ones), rusks and baby drinks.
- If you choose to give your child sweet foods or fruit juice, only give them at mealtimes. Remember to dilute 1 part juice to 10 parts water. Your child should have no more than 1 drink of fruit juice (150ml) in any 1 day as part of their 5 a day.
- Don't give your child biscuits or sweets – ask family and friends to do the same. Offer things like stickers, crayons, colouring books and bubbles instead. They may be more expensive than sweets, but they last longer.
- At bedtime or during the night, only give your child breast milk, formula milk or cooled boiled water.
- If your child needs medicine, ask your pharmacist or GP if there's a sugar-free option.

Sucrose, glucose, dextrose, maltose, fructose and hydrolysed starch are all sugars. Invert sugar or syrup, honey, raw sugar, brown sugar, cane sugar, muscovado sugar and concentrated fruit juices are also sugars.



SHOULD I GIVE MY BABY A DUMMY?

It's fine to give your baby a dummy but avoid using them after 12 months of age. Using dummies after this can encourage an open bite, which is when teeth move to make space for the dummy. They may also affect your child's speech development.

Discourage your child from talking or making sounds with a dummy or their thumb in their mouth, and don't dip dummies in anything sweet, such as sugar or jam.