

Mouth care for children

Brushing your child's teeth

Children need help physically with brushing their teeth until they are at least seven years of age. It is important to start a suitable brushing routine from an early age to prevent tooth decay and gum problems.

Let them clean their teeth first (so that they can learn the skill of tooth brushing), and then you need to check that they have cleaned them properly and clean the areas they have missed out.

The easiest way to brush a young child's teeth is from behind, either with them sitting on your knee or standing in front of you with their back to you. Gently raise the chin resting their head against you so that you are able to look down into their mouth. Then gently brush each tooth covering all the surfaces.

- Use a small-headed, medium textured toothbrush.
- For children aged 0 - 3 years you should use a **smear** of family fluoride toothpaste.
- For children 3 years and above you should use a **pea** sized amount of family fluoride toothpaste.
- Brush teeth last thing at night and on one other occasion.
- Spit, don't rinse after brushing.
- Fluoride strengthens enamel and makes bacteria less harmful.
- Children should **not** eat or swallow toothpaste.



Healthy diet

A healthy balanced diet is important for your child. To ensure a healthy comfortable mouth, avoid giving your child unnecessary sugars.

- Try to keep sweet foods, soft drinks and fruit juices limited to meal times only.
- Offer your child healthy snacks such as fruit, raw vegetables or bread sticks.
- Plain milk and still water are the only safe drinks for teeth between meals.
- If fruit juice is given it should be diluted (1 part juice to 10 parts water), and given at meal times only.
- Fizzy drinks contain sugar and acid (regular or diet) that can have a damaging effect on teeth. If fizzy drinks are given it is best to keep them to meal times and keep drinking times short. Give your child a straw and don't let them swish the drink around their mouth.

Tooth decay

Did you know that there are millions of bacteria in your mouth? This bacteria loves sugary foods and drink and feeds on those which are left behind after eating, turning the sugars into acids. These acids can cause holes in teeth, which is tooth decay.

Dental check-ups

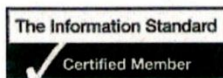
It is a good idea to take your child along when you are going for a simple check-up with your own dentist. Ask your dentist when it would be best for your child to have a check-up. Prevention is always better than cure. If your child visits the dentist regularly any problems will be spotted early, making treatment easier.

For further advice or information please contact:

**Coventry Community Dental Service, Oral Health Promotion
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If you require this publication in a different format or language, please contact the Trust's Equality and Diversity Department on 024 7653 6802

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