

Sure Start Steps To Healthy Teeth

A healthy mouth is so important to the general health of our children. We need our teeth for 3 reasons: Eating, Talking and Appearance, so it is important to look after children's teeth from the start. Baby teeth are so important; they help the child when moving on from soft weaning foods to solids. Baby teeth act as spacers to guide the second teeth into place.

The main enemy of all teeth is SUGAR! It is not safe in any form. Sweets, cakes, biscuits, fizzy drinks and squashes, even baby drinks, all contain sugar. The only safe drinks for teeth are water and milk. It is very important to wean a child from a bottle and onto a cup from about 6 months of age.

How our teeth rot!

We all have plaque germs living in our mouths even as soon as the first tooth comes through we start and produce these germs! Plaque becomes active when we eat or drink sugar. The plaque germs take sugar and squirt acid onto our teeth. The acid then burns into the enamel and if it is not repaired this could lead to pain and loss of teeth through extraction. Dentists call this process an acid attack; our mouths can cope with only four acid attacks per day. Think how many times little ones want drinks, sweets or biscuit in-between meals! We can stop decay by keeping all sugar that we eat or drink to mealtimes, even one sweet will make enough acid to last half an hour in the mouth. It is not the amount of sugar we eat or drink but how often we eat or drink sugar.



Feel proud of your Children's smile? A healthy smile can mean a confident child.

Manufacturers are really crafty about sugar! They will try and disguise the sugar they add to our foods and drinks. They will use words to disguise the sugar they have added – such as:

**Sucrose, Fructose, Glucose, Dextrose, Syrup,
Molasses, Caramel, Starch and Icing**

What can we snack on?

Choose healthy options for snacks: fruit, crackers spread with butter or cheese, cheese triangles or stringy cheese, celery, cucumber or tomato. Any type of bread, toast, crumpets or pitta bread can make a healthy snack for our teeth. Freeze bananas or grapes in the summer to cool children down!

Safe Drinks

Remember the safest drinks for teeth are water or milk! Make water more exciting by adding fresh fruit to ice cubes!

"Hidden" Sugars in Food

Product	Portion amount	Sugar per Portion (teaspoons)
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Chocolate Biscuits	2 biscuits	1.5
Custard Cream Biscuit	2 biscuits	1
Ice Cream	1 scoop	2
Fruit Yoghurt	1 small carton	4.5



Bad teeth caused by consuming too much sugar

BakedBeans	1/2 medium tin	2.5
Tinned Fruit	1/2 small tin	6
Jam	2 teaspoonful	2.5
Tinned Tomato Soup	1/2 tin	1
Sugar Puffs	3 tablespoons	4
Cornflakes	3 tablespoons	0.5

Boiled Sweets	1 packet	24
Milk Chocolate	1 small bar	6.5
Mars Bar	1 bar	9
Bounty Bar	1 bar	8
Smarties	1 tube	7
Bubble Gum	1 packet	8
Polo Mints	1 tube	7.5



Plaque is produced as soon as the first tooth appears

Coca Cola	1 can	8
Lucozade	1 glass	4.5
Ribena	1 glass diluted	6

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In our last article we looked at keeping our teeth healthy by saving all sugary foods and drinks to mealtimes. In this article the topic is tooth brushing and how important it is to keep our mouths clean.

We brush our teeth to remove plaque and food debris, this keeps our teeth looking clean, but the most important reason is to keep our gums looking healthy.

Lets start at the beginning!

Choosing a toothbrush

Choosing a toothbrush can seem to be confusing. Look at the range of different toothbrushes that are available. Parents/carers can be persuaded to buy the brush with the latest cartoon character, or the fanciest handle but will that be the best toothbrush for their child? A toothbrush does not have to cost a fortune as long as parents/carers follow these easy rules:

Choose a toothbrush with:



Notice the adult sized handle and very compact head on both of these toothbrushes!

1 A Small Compact Head

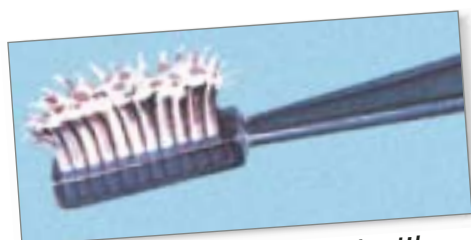
If the head of the toothbrush is too big, toothbrushing will be much more difficult.

2 Soft Nylon Bristles

Never use anything harder than medium.

3 A Straight Handle

Long enough for an adult to hold.



A toothbrush that looks like this cannot clean properly.

Try not to be swayed by expensive advertising campaigns; it may not be the most suitable brush and remember the toothbrush will need to be changed every 3 months or when the bristles begin to splay out!

Choosing Toothpaste

Buying toothpaste too can be confusing because of the various ranges that are available, but it can be made easier by choosing a toothpaste that all of the family can use. Nearly all toothpastes

have similar ingredients; there are exceptions, like tooth whitening and toothpastes for sensitive teeth. (Not recommended for children!)

The main ingredient that is very important is fluoride. Fluoride can help to strengthen the outer layer of our teeth (enamel). The recommended amount of fluoride in this area is 1000ppm (parts per million). Only use a pea sized amount of toothpaste!

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The following list of toothpastes can be used for all the family, choose a flavour that the family like:

- Maclean's Mildmint • ASDA Protect range • ASDA Smartprice • Morrison's Total Care
- Aquafresh • Morrison's Bettabuy • Morrison's Blue Minty Gel • Ultrabrite • Mentadent P
- Tesco's Value Toothpaste • Tesco's Total Care Coolmint • Tesco's Freshmint Minty Gel Stripe
- Aldi Brands • Netto 'Bright Smile' Fresh Mint

All of these toothpastes have the right amount of fluoride to help strengthen our children's teeth!

Now that we have bought our toothbrush and toothpaste we can start to brush some teeth! Start to brush as soon as the first baby tooth starts to push through at approximately 6 months of age. Follow these step-by-step instructions to help you to brush:



Sit the baby on your lap, gently tilting the baby's head so it rests on your shoulder. (It is easier to work from behind!)



Hold the toothbrush securely in one hand and use the other to move the lips, so that cleaning can begin.



Work around the mouth brushing each tooth with a short side-to-side motion concentrating around the gum-line. This is a good technique for keeping gums healthy.



It may help by brushing in front of a mirror, as this helps both parent and child to see what is happening.

The same technique can be used for older children up to the age of 12. Parents/carers must remember to supervise tooth brushing until 7 years of age. As soon as a child can spit out the excess toothpaste, it is advisable not to rinse with water, allowing fluoride to 'seep' into and strengthen the tooth.

Penny receives her gift vouchers from Rad Ainley.