



N GUIDE TO:

Oral health

Good oral hygiene is an important aspect of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and we have made this a core focus of Physical Health within the N Curriculum. Establishing good oral hygiene and habits develops a child's understanding for best practices, as well as fosters accountability from a young age.

There are several key steps you can take at home to promote good oral health in children.

Cutting down on sugar

To help avoid tooth decay, limit the amount of sugars your child consumes. Try to keep sugars to mealtimes and not in your child's snacks - the more often their teeth come into contact with sugar, the greater the risk of tooth decay.

While some sugars are naturally occurring, other sugars are added in by the manufacturer or chef. Be mindful too of natural sugars that can be found in fruits and vegetables, as well as in juices, purees and milks.

For good oral hygiene, the NHS advises that water and milk are the only safe drinks to offer children.

Drinking bottles and cups

From 6 months old, you can offer babies drinks in open-top cups - these are cups with no lids that spill if knocked over. These cups help develop their sipping skills and strengthen their facial muscles for biting, chewing, and talking. When introducing open-top cups, start with smaller cups or those with handles - these are easier for babies to grip. Offer a small amount of water at first, and gradually increase this over time.

From 12 months+, children should be encouraged to have all drinks in open-top cups and avoid using bottles or cups that require children to suck.

Brushing teeth

As soon as a child's first tooth appears, they are ready for tooth brushing to start. A child's baby teeth help them to bite and chew, as well as support their speech and language development. Their role is to also make space for and help guide adult teeth.

NHS England advocates the following steps for effective tooth brushing:

- Ensure you use a fluoride toothpaste that contains at least 1000 parts per million (ppm) of fluoride - you can find this information on the packaging.
- Use a smear of toothpaste for children under 3, and a pea sized amount for those aged 3 to 6.
- Brush in circles for around 2 minutes, making sure to cover the whole of each tooth.
- Brush twice a day, including once just before bed - this allows the fluoride to keep working while children sleep.
- Children should spit, not rinse, after brushing - this avoids washing away the fluoride.
- Adults should help children to brush their teeth until they are 7 years old to make sure they are brushing properly.

Going to the dentist

When a child gets their first tooth or from 1 year old, whichever comes first, then it's time to visit the dentist. If you would like some help or guidance on your child's first dentist visit, our team can recommend some excellent learning resources.