

Happy Healthy Smiles

On The Move



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Dental decay is the most common dental disease, but it is also largely preventable. Government targets state that by the year 2010, 60% of 5 year olds have to be decay free. Although tooth decay can affect any child, those in the following groups are most likely to be affected:

- Children living in more deprived areas
- Children from low income families
- Children from ethnic minority backgrounds

Why do children's baby teeth (deciduous teeth) decay?

Tooth decay occurs because sugars from the diet mix with plaque bacteria (plaque is a sticky substance on the surface of the teeth) to form an acid. This rots the tooth surface. This process is known as demineralisation.

If sugar is eaten often during the day the amount of acid is high and the tooth will decay. The tooth will have to be checked by a Dentist who will decide whether to fill the cavity or remove the decayed tooth.



PREVENTION

Diet

There are no hard and fast rules about how many sugar intakes per day will be “safe” for teeth. The best advice is to limit sugar-containing foods and drinks to mealtimes. This is regarded as the “safest” time.



Tooth brushing

It is recommended that teeth should be brushed as soon as the first tooth appears in the mouth, using a soft baby toothbrush and a smear of fluoride toothpaste. Regular brushing morning and night is a good habit to establish from an early age.

Fluoride toothpaste will help to strengthen the outer layer of the tooth (enamel) and make it more resistant to the sugar and acid.

It is important that parents/carers help children to brush their teeth until the child reaches the age of 7. Until then, most children are not able to brush really well. Regular tooth brushing starting at a young age establishes a good habit that will hopefully continue well into adulthood.

A pea sized amount of toothpaste should be applied by a parent/carer. Encourage Children to spit and rinse from an early age. Brushes should be rinsed afterwards with water.

Tooth brushing in Nurseries

Tooth brushing in nurseries is an ideal way to develop a good habit in children under 5. It also gives the opportunity to apply fluoride to the surfaces of baby teeth. Norfolk has a Tooth Brushing Programme.

The aim of the programme is to:

- Influence behaviour and teach children a life-skill.
- Establish a regular tooth brushing routine and apply fluoride to the enamel surface of the teeth daily.

The Community Dental Service has an Oral Health Educator who is employed to implement and monitor the Tooth Brushing Programme. She works very closely with nurseries and schools and offers professional advice on matters relating to healthy eating and oral health.

The Children are taught by the Oral Health Educator to identify their toothbrush by colour and animal symbol and brush their teeth well. Daily supervision of the tooth brushing is then taken over by the nursery staff, with periodic visits from the Oral Health Educator for support and reinforcement. As Part of the protocol, nursery staff participates fully in the programme and standards are monitored on a regular basis.

If you have any queries with regard to the Tooth Brushing Programme or oral health in general, please contact Mandy Loades the Oral Health Educator on 01493 858325.

Fluoride

Fluoride helps to strengthen the tooth enamel and gives protection from the effects of sugar and acid. It is generally recommended that children use adult toothpaste. The fluoride content should be at a concentration of up to 1,000 parts per million. Children who are at high risk of tooth decay may be helped by fluoride supplements. The Dentist can prescribe these free of charge in the form of drops or tables for children. Advice and other fluoride treatments can also be given during dental visits.

Regular Dental Visits

It is important to promote regular visits to the Dentist from an early age, to begin a healthy habit.

Also:

- Parents can receive appropriate dietary advice.
- Any signs of dental disease can be recognised early.
- The child can get used to the dental surgery.

Teething

Baby teeth usually start appearing at around the age of 6 months. The signs to look for are:

- Dribbling
- Red cheeks
- Biting or chewing anything near the mouth
- Going off food
- Obvious discomfort

What should you do?

Sometimes teething pain can be helped by simply rubbing the gums with a clean finger to help relieve the pressure. Teething gels and liquids may help. Your local Pharmacist will give advice on sugar-free pain relief if necessary.

A cool, water filled teething ring may also help to soothe. These should be kept in the fridge - do not freeze them.

Drinking Cups

Drinking from a feeder cup should be encouraged from approximately 6 months and the child should be weaned off a feeding bottle ideally from the age of one year. No drinks, other than milk or water, should be given in a bottle. Milk or water are the only drinks that should be offered between meals. However, it is worth keeping in mind that too much milk between mealtimes might fill the child up and put them off eating. At mealtimes pure fruit juice (1 part juice to at least 2 parts water) or well-diluted squash (one part juice to 10 parts water) can be given. Fizzy drinks, "diet" or otherwise, are not recommended as these contain a high amount of acid, which can dissolve the enamel of the teeth. Using a straw can help to limit damage caused by frequent drinks.

Dummies

Dummies can give relief and help to comfort a distressed child. Once the child is asleep, remove the dummy. There are “good” dummies and “bad” dummies. The good ones should have a small teat, which is flat in shape (orthodontic type), as this does not cause distortion of the mouth or palate. The shield or plastic rim should be shaped, with ventilation holes, which prevent soreness around the mouth. DO NOT dip the dummy into any sweet substances such as jam or honey, as this will cause the teeth to decay. Dummies should be discarded ideally before the age of 3 years.

Medicines

Children needing regular medicines should be under the regular care of a Dentist, who will offer preventive advice and treatments as necessary. Parents/carers should always request a sugar free type. Almost all medicines supplied today are available in a sugar free form. Children on long-term medication who are prescribed medicines with sugar in them can suffer very high levels of tooth decay.

Sugars in foods and drinks

Parents should be advised to look out for the hidden sugars in foods and drinks. The common ones are sucrose (refined from beet and cane), glucose, maltose (from many foods) and fructose (from fruit).

The following sweeteners are added to some foods and drinks during processing and have the potential to cause tooth decay:

Dextrose	Maltose
Invert Sugar	Hydrolysed Starch
Glucose	Sucrose
Lactose	Fructose
Glucose Syrup	

Also, look out for the following products, which are basically a mixture of sugars:

Brown Sugar	Treacle
Maple & Golden Syrup	Honey

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THE IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN THE UNDER-5S

There's more to healthy living than food! It is important that healthy eating is promoted in the context of being active. Research indicates that active children are more likely to become active adults and reap the benefits associated with an active lifestyle throughout life.

Young children are naturally active and enjoy physical activity through play. Their enthusiasm needs to be encouraged, since levels of physical activity among school-aged children in Britain are currently low and decline as they become older. Many children are spending more and more of their time in less active pursuits, like watching TV or playing computer/video games which can contribute to the development of childhood and adult obesity and associated heart disease and diabetes. A recent study found that 20% of 4 year olds in the UK are overweight and 8% are obese. Children are getting fatter, not just because some may be eating more but because physical activity has radically decreased.



Young children find continuous activity difficult and it may be more appropriate for them to take part in frequent bouts of sporadic activity such as running, jumping, balancing, dancing, etc. Walking with an adult to playgroup or the shops, for example, is one way of integrating physical activity into everyday life and benefits all ages.

It is also important to remember that young children cannot be expected to follow an adult pattern of physical activity. Young children find balancing more difficult, are less strong, have shorter arms and legs in relation to the rest of their bodies and are not ready to carry out complicated movements that involve many parts of their body such as catching a ball. Children under 5 also find rules and teamwork difficult to follow. It is important to help children do things in ways they are currently physically capable of.

Resources & Local Leisure Links:

- Tumble Tots Mobile Play Group: Field View, Mill Road, Stokesby, Great Yarmouth, 01493 750520

- Soft Play Areas for Toddlers:

Adventure World	Great Yarmouth Marina Centre, Marine Parade, Great Yarmouth 01493 851521
Sir Bounce-a-lot	Marine Parade Great Yarmouth (beyond the Pleasure Beach on Seafront)
The Jungle	The Winter Gardens, Marine Parade, Great Yarmouth
The House of Fun MB's	Englands Lane, Gorleston, Great Yarmouth Beach Road, Hemsby, 01493 732635
The Fun Fort	The Castle Norwich Road, Caister 01493 728933

- The Youth Sport Trust has two excellent programmes called Top Tots (18 months to 3 year olds) and Top Start (ages 3 to 5 years old). These programmes include a number of games and activities designed to promote physical activity, the ability to play as part of a team, an understanding of those with physical and mental disabilities and are good for developing general physical skills such as balance etc. You will be able to get more information about these programmes on the Youth Sport Trust's website:
www.youthsporttrust.org/ystr_top_top2.html

