

Oral health advice for adults

What is tooth decay?

Tooth decay is also known as dental caries. It is caused by plaque acids which have not been removed. These slowly dissolve the outer surface of the teeth which is called enamel.

Tooth decay damages the teeth by causing small (usually dark) holes, which will grow in size if left untreated. If you notice any tooth decay you should contact your dentist as soon as possible.

Another way to try and reduce the possibility of tooth decay is to avoid/limit fizzy drinks, fruit juices and other sugary food and drinks. This is because they often contain a high amount of sugar and can be acidic which can cause erosion and tooth decay. Milk and water are the safest drinks to have to protect your teeth.

Dentist

It is important to visit your dentist regularly. This is usually every six months unless advised otherwise by your dentist. If you have any concerns before your next check-up is due, do get in touch with the practice for an earlier appointment.

Your dentist will be able to check the health of your teeth and mouth and provide any treatment as necessary.

It is important to mention any other oral conditions that you may experience such as a dry mouth or ulcers to your dentist.

If you are not registered with a dentist, you can find your local NHS dentist by calling 111 or visiting NHS choices website.

What is Fluoride?

Fluoride is a natural mineral which can be found in some foods and water supplies. Fluoride is also found in many toothpastes and mouthwashes. Studies show that fluoride is proven to help reduce the risk of tooth decay in both children and adults.

The amount of fluoride in dental products can be found on the packaging.

In a toothpaste for adults, there should be 1,350-1,500ppm (parts per million) fluoride.

In a mouthwash there is usually 225-250ppm fluoride.

After brushing, it is best not to rinse your mouth with water or mouthwash as this removes the fluoride that has been left on your teeth from the toothpaste. If the toothpaste is left on the teeth then you will be getting

the maximum benefit from the fluoride until you go to eat or drink something.

It is recommended to use an alcohol free fluoride mouthwash at a different time to brushing to get the maximum benefit of the fluoride in both toothpaste and mouthwash. This could be after lunch or when you get home from work etc.

Alcohol

Consuming alcohol is known to have a negative impact on our body; this includes our oral health and increases our chances of developing:

- Gum disease
- Tooth loss/decay
- Oral cancer
- Alcohol related accidents to the face/teeth

For advice or support on alcohol consumption, contact your GP.

Why is good oral hygiene important?

Good oral health is the absence of pain and disease with the ability to eat, drink and communicate which is important for our quality of life.

Good oral hygiene can help prevent tooth decay, gum disease, bad breath and enables us to keep our own teeth for longer by avoiding tooth loss.

Poor oral hygiene can also contribute to other general health problems such as diabetes, heart disease and other health issues.

Smoking

Smoking can lead to many different health issues and diseases and, in some instances, these can be fatal. Although most people are aware of the effect that smoking can have on their body and general health, many are unaware of the effects that smoking has on their mouths which include:

- stained teeth
- bad breath (halitosis)
- tooth loss
- gum disease
- loss of taste and smell
- reduced blood supply to the mouth
- increased build-up of plaque and tartar on your teeth
- delayed healing following dental extractions and other oral surgery
- increased risk of oral cancer

If you would like help to successfully quit smoking, contact your GP, pharmacy or local smoking cessation service.

Tooth brushing

Everyone should brush their teeth a minimum of twice a day. Firstly after breakfast and then before bed at night.

Every time you clean your teeth you should:

- Use a medium size and texture toothbrush.
- Use a pea sized amount of fluoride toothpaste.
- Always look in the mirror when brushing your teeth to ensure you are reaching all areas effectively.
- If using a manual toothbrush:
 - Use small circular movements across all surfaces of your teeth and gums.
- If using an electric toothbrush:
 - hold the toothbrush on each tooth and let the toothbrush do the work. There is no need to use circular or scrubbing motions with an electric toothbrush.
- It is important to clean in between your teeth at least once a day. There are many different products that you can use:
 - Dental floss
 - Interdental/bottle brushes
 - Floss picks

If you are unsure how to use these products, speak to your dentist or hygienist for advice.

If you notice any bleeding when brushing, it is important to mention this to your dentist as this could be a sign of gum disease. In the meantime, keep brushing your teeth twice daily and do not let bleeding deter you from doing so.

For further information, please contact our
Mouth Care Lead on 01342 414000 ext 6610

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would like this leaflet
in a different format.

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