

Oral hygiene advice

A guide for children, young people and their parents/carers Maxillofacial and Orthodontics Department

Why do I need to brush my teeth?

Brushing your teeth and gums daily is important because a good brushing technique will remove plaque. Plaque is a white/yellow thin and sticky layer of bacteria that constantly forms on all surfaces of our teeth and gums. Bacteria in our mouths combine with saliva and small food particles to form plaque. If the plaque isn't removed it continues to build up in layers and feeds on the food debris that hasn't been cleaned away. This can cause tooth decay and gum related diseases.

What is tooth decay?

Tooth decay is also known as dental caries.

It is caused by plaque which has not been removed. These slowly dissolve the outer surface of the teeth (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. Milk and water are the safest drinks to have to protect your teeth.

Who should brush my teeth?

We recommend that an adult supervises tooth brushing until the age of seven or eight years old, either by an adult brushing the teeth for you or, if you brush your own teeth with an adult watching how you do it and helping as required.

How do I clean my teeth?

You will need to brush your teeth twice a day, ideally at least 30 minutes after your breakfast and again just before you go to bed at night.

Every time you clean your teeth you should:

- Use an age appropriate fluoride toothpaste. Under 3's should only use a smear / grain of rice amount and 3 years and over should use a pea sized amount.
- Always look in the mirror when brushing your teeth so you can check you are reaching all of your teeth with your toothbrush.
- When using a manual toothbrush, always use small circular movements (the bristles of the brush should point towards the gums).
- When using an electric toothbrush, hold the toothbrush on each tooth surface towards the gum, allowing the toothbrush to do the work (do not use scrubbing motions) don't forget to brush all surfaces of your teeth and brush your gums gently!

Which toothbrush should I use?

There are many different types of toothbrushes available. It is best to get a small headed brush with soft bristles. We advise you to change their toothbrush every 6 months to ensure it is maintaining its effectiveness, or earlier if the bristles become visibly frayed.

What is fluoride?

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

Children up to the age of six should use a smear of fluoride toothpaste containing at least 1,000ppm (parts per million) fluoride.

Children from the age of seven should use a pea- sized quantity of fluoride toothpaste containing 1350-1500ppm fluoride. Check the toothpaste packet if you are unsure, or ask your dentist.

You should not rinse your mouth with water straight after brushing your teeth as this removes the fluoride that the toothpaste has left on the teeth.

How else can I help protect my teeth?

The main cause of tooth decay is sugar, eating too much of it too frequently.

Every time something sugary is consumed, it starts to break down the mineral surface of the teeth. The teeth recover after eating something sugary but this can take hours. If sugary foods/drinks are being consumed regularly throughout the day the teeth won't have time to repair themselves. This can lead to acid erosion of the teeth.

Tooth friendly snack ideas:

- ✓ cubes of cheese
- ✓ plain popcorn
- ✓ carrot or cucumber sticks
- ✓ hummus and pitta breads
- ✓ plain/natural yoghurt
- ✓ breadsticks

During the first year of our lives the foundation for healthy permanent teeth is established. Poor diet, inadequate tooth brushing and excessive amount of sugars in the diet have been strongly linked to tooth decay.

When should I start taking my child to the dentist?

It is a good idea to take your child to the dentist when their first milk teeth appear. They will then be able to become familiar with the surroundings and get to know the dentist. The dentist can also help prevent decay and detect any oral health problems at an early stage.

Currently, NHS dental care is free for children. If you are unregistered and require help finding your local NHS practice, please visit:

www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist

Alternatively, please scan this QR code to go directly to the webpage.

What are disclosing tablets?

Disclosing tablets are small, coloured chewable tablets that contain harmless dye. When chewed, the dye will stick to the plaque which remains on the teeth and gums, highlighting the areas that are being missed. The plaque is then removed by simply brushing the stained areas thoroughly. We recommend using these tablets once a week to help you see how you are doing with your brushing and to make sure that you are not missing anywhere.

It would be a good idea to use petroleum jelly or something similar on your lips before using the tablets as they can stain your lips! Be sure not to swallow the tablet and always follow the instructions on the packet.

Motivational aids

We understand that finding time and motivation to brush twice a day can sometimes be hard. Below are some tips to help with this:

- To be involved with choosing your toothbrush and/or toothpaste
- Brushing teeth to your favourite song
- Creating a toothbrushing / reward chart (like overleaf) to boost motivation
- Make toothbrushing a family activity
- Brush your teeth along to a story or pretend you are dentists yourselves!
- There are many age appropriate YouTube videos on toothbrushing / motivational games
- There are also lots of different mobile apps, including:-
 - Brush DJ
 - Brush up
 - Disney magic timer by Oral B
 - Aquafresh brush time
 - Tiny Dentist
 - Heroes of hygiene
 - Toothsavers

Thumb/finger sucking

Thumb/finger sucking can have an effect on the jaws and also on a child's speech and can cause long-term problems.

This is a common habit that occurs in infants. Children usually give up thumb/finger sucking by the age of four.

If the habit continues past the age when their permanent teeth start to erupt, it could potentially affect the roof of their mouth and/or cause crooked teeth to develop. These results vary and influencing factors are the frequency, duration, intensity, and position of the thumb/ finger in the child's mouth.

Recommendations for breaking the habit:

- timing is key – attempt this during a less stressful time
- try to motivate your child (with the use of reward charts)
- there are a variety of deterrent methods and products available, for example a foul tasting varnish to paint on the finger/thumb, a sock or mitten on the hand to prevent the habit at night
- you can ask your dentist for advice and your pharmacist for recommended products

Contact us

If you have any questions about the enclosed information or would like further oral health advice, please ask your Dentist or contact our Mouth Care Team on:

01342 414000 extension 6610.

If you'd like to find out how you can support QVH, please visit www.supportqvh.org



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My terrific T Rex tooth-brushing chart

	Week 1		Week 2		Week 3		Week 4	
	Morning	Night	Morning	Night	Morning	Night	Morning	Night
Monday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tuesday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wednesday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thursday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Saturday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Saturday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



How many teeth does T.Rex have?
Count them if you dare...