

# Abacus Nursery - From brushing their first tooth to their first trip to the dentist, here's how to take care of your child's teeth

One of the Abacus goals that all children at nursery work towards supports children in learning about healthy food choices and oral hygiene. NHS dental treatment for children is free. It is a good idea to take your child with you when you go for your own dental appointments so they get used to the idea. A regular teeth-cleaning routine is essential for good dental health. Follow these tips and you can help keep your child's teeth decay-free.

## **Toothbrushing tips**

It's important to use a fluoride toothpaste, as this helps prevent and control tooth decay.

## **Toothbrushes**

Toothbrushes should have a small head size (the toothbrush needs to be small enough to reach behind the back teeth and brush them easily). The bristles should be medium/soft so that they do not hurt the gums. Toothbrushes should be replaced at least every 3 months, or sooner if required. Toothbrushes should be individually identifiable for each child

## **Children aged up to 3 years**

Start brushing your baby's teeth as soon as the first milk tooth breaks through (usually at around 6 months, but it can be earlier or later).

Parents or carers should brush or supervise toothbrushing. Brush the teeth in small circles, covering all the surfaces.

Brush teeth twice daily for about 2 minutes with fluoride toothpaste.

Brush last thing at night before bed and on 1 other occasion, 30 minutes before or after eating.

Use children's fluoride toothpaste containing no less than 1,000ppm of fluoride (check label) or family toothpaste containing between 1,350ppm and 1,500ppm fluoride.

Use only a smear of toothpaste encourage and your child to spit the toothpaste out afterwards..

Make sure children don't eat or lick toothpaste from the tube.

Not all children like having their teeth brushed, so you may have to keep trying. Make it into a game, or brush your own teeth at the same time and then help your child finish their own.

## **Children aged 3 to 6 years**

Brush at least twice daily for about 2 minutes with fluoride toothpaste.

Brush last thing at night before bed and at least on 1 other occasion.

Brushing should be supervised by a parent or carer.

Use children's fluoride toothpaste containing no less than 1,000ppm of fluoride (check label) or family toothpaste containing between 1,350ppm and 1,500ppm fluoride.

Use only a pea-sized amount of toothpaste.

Spit out after brushing and don't rinse - if you rinse, the fluoride won't work as well.

To find a dentist, you can ask at your local clinic, or contact NHS England on 0300 311 22 3 or email [england.contactus@nhs.net](mailto:england.contactus@nhs.net).

### **Sugar and tooth decay**

Sugar causes tooth decay. It's not just about the amount of sugar in sweet food and drinks, but how long and how often the teeth are in contact with sugar.

When your baby starts eating solid foods, encourage them to eat savoury food and drinks with no sugar. Check if there's sugar in pre-prepared baby foods (including the savoury ones), rusks and baby drinks.

Lollipops and sweet/fizzy drinks in a formula bottle or feeder cup are particularly damaging, because they bathe the teeth in sugar for long periods of time. The acid in drinks like fruit juice and squash can harm teeth as well. Fruit juice should be diluted and only given at mealtimes. Remember to dilute 1 part juice to 10 parts water. Your child should have no more than 1 drink of fruit juice (150ml) in any 1 day as part of their 5 A Day.

The sugars found naturally in whole fruit and milk are less likely to cause tooth decay, so you don't need to cut down on these types of sugars.

### **Should I give my baby a dummy?**

It's fine to give your baby a dummy but avoid using them after 12 months of age. Using dummies after this can encourage an open bite, which is when teeth move to make space for the dummy. They may also affect your child's speech development.

Discourage your child from talking or making sounds with a dummy or their thumb in their mouth, and don't dip dummies in anything sweet, such as sugar or jam as this will cause early decay.

### **When it comes to teething, all babies are different**

#### **Teething symptoms:**

Baby teeth sometimes emerge with no pain or discomfort at all.

At other times, you may notice:

- their gum is sore and red where the tooth is coming through
- they have a mild temperature of 38C (rarely higher)
- they have 1 flushed cheek
- they have a rash on their face
- they're rubbing their ear
- they're dribbling more than usual
- they're gnawing and chewing on things a lot
- they're more fretful than usual
- they're not sleeping very well

Some people think that teething causes other symptoms, such as diarrhoea, but the NHS say that there is no real evidence to support this, and that the diarrhoea could be due to a rise in temp.

You know your baby best. Get medical advice if they have any symptoms that are causing you concern. You can call [NHS 111](#) or contact a GP.

If you would like any further advice please let us know 😊