



Improving oral health for children and young people

for health visitors, school nurses and practice nurses

Our ambition is that every child grows up free from tooth decay as part of having the best start in life

Stats and facts



Tooth decay is the most common oral disease affecting children and young people in England



Some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people (including isolated groups such as young carers and military families) may have significant oral health problems



Nearly a 1/4 of 5-year-old children have tooth decay and have on average 3 teeth affected



Tooth decay was the most common reason for hospital admission for children aged 5 to 9 years in 2014-15 with over 26,000 admissions



12% of 3-year-olds have visible tooth decay with an average of 3 teeth affected

Poor oral health is a sentinel marker of wider health and social care issues



Poor nutrition
Obesity

The need for parenting support
In some instances safeguarding and neglect

Impact of poor oral health on general health and wellbeing



Pain, difficulties with eating, sleeping, speech and socialising
Poor emotional health

Days off school for children and days off work for parents
School readiness

Costs



£35 million spent by hospital trusts on the extraction of teeth for under 18s in 2014/15

NHS in England spends £3.4 billion per year on all ages on dental care

10 tips



1. Breastfeeding provides the best nutrition for babies



2. Brush teeth as soon as the first primary tooth appears (at approximately 6 months of age)



3. Teeth should be brushed at least twice daily with a fluoride toothpaste, last thing at night and on at least one other occasion



4. Brushing at bedtime ensures that the fluoride continues protecting the teeth while children sleep



5. For maximum protection from tooth decay use a family toothpaste containing 1350 to 1500 ppm of fluoride but only a small amount. Children under 3 years old should use a smear of toothpaste, and children aged 3-6 years no more than a pea-size amount



6. Parents/carers should brush or supervise tooth brushing until at least 7 years of age



7. Don't rinse with water after brushing teeth as this rinses off the fluoride from the tooth. Spitting out excess toothpaste is preferable



8. The amount of foods and drinks that contain free sugars should be reduced

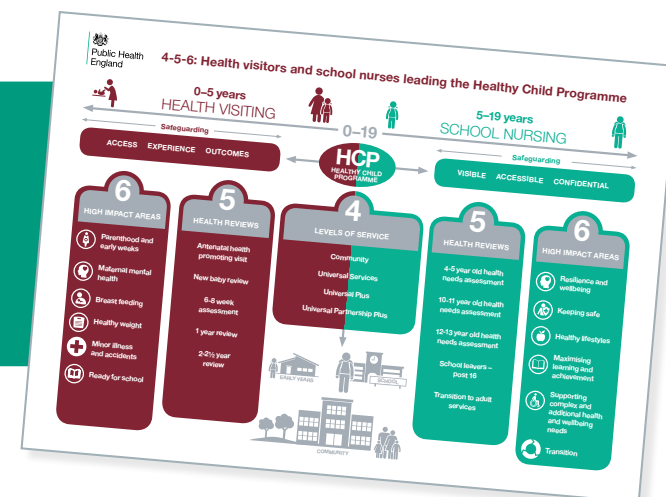


9. Avoid foods and drinks containing sugar at bedtime. Sugar-free medicine should be recommended



10. Parents/carers should be advised to take their children to visit the dentist for preventive advice as soon as they are born

Using the 4-5-6 model and identified contact points, health visitors and school nurses can promote good oral health as leaders of public health



Good practice – key oral health messages across the life-course



Antenatal: remind each woman she is entitled to free NHS dental treatment if she is pregnant when she starts treatment and to free NHS dental treatment for 12 months after her baby is born

To find out more details check the NHS Choices link:
[Are pregnant women entitled to free NHS dental treatment?](#)

Remind parents to use their 'Red Book'

NHS dental treatment for children is free (see [NHS HC11](#) for age restrictions)



At each of the following contacts check that the parent/carer is using the dental pages in the 'Red Book' and that their child is visiting the dentist for preventive advice and treatment.



At 6 months old: give information about the risk of tooth decay; brushing teeth as soon as they erupt with a smear of no less than 1000ppm fluoride toothpaste. You can advise 1350–1500ppm fluoride toothpaste if the child is at risk of tooth decay - but only a smear of paste (see 10 tips); give advice on the consumption of sugars in food and drinks; introduction to drinking from a free flow cup; teething; sugar-free medicines. Also advise about not putting anything other than milk or water in feeding bottles



At 12 months: give advice on tooth brushing including adult supervision; fluoride toothpaste; dietary advice on food and drinks; discourage feeding from a bottle; drinking only water or milk between meals; nothing to eat or drink after brushing at night and sugar free medicines



At 2-2 1/2 years: give advice as above plus spit don't rinse after brushing teeth and have nothing to eat or drink after brushing teeth at night



At 3 years: give advice as above but advise a pea-sized amount of 1350–1500ppm fluoride. Signpost all children to dentist for application of fluoride varnish to the teeth 2 times per year



At 4-5 years (primary school entry): give advice on the eruption of permanent molars and incisors. Use 'school' routine as an opportunity to promote oral health



At 7-8 years: as above. Children should be able to brush their own teeth but should be helped or supervised by an adult when brushing until at least 7 years old



At 11-12 years: encourage older children and teenagers to take control of their oral health and reduce the amount of sugar they eat or drink

Delivering better oral health: an evidence-based toolkit for prevention

Resources

[Change4Life](#)

[Child Oral Health, applying All Our Health](#)

[Knowledge Hub, Best Start in Life](#)

[The Red Book](#)