

Children under the age of three can use a smear of family toothpaste containing at least 1000ppm (parts per million) fluoride. Any less and it won't be as effective at preventing decay. Children aged from three to six should use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste containing 1350-1500ppm fluoride. Make sure your child doesn't eat or lick the toothpaste from the tube.

Brush your child's teeth twice a day, once just before bed and at least one other time during the day. Encourage your child to spit out excess toothpaste, but don't rinse with lots of water. Supervise tooth brushing until your child is seven or eight years old. Explain that you're practicing your brushing skills on their teeth, and that they are helping you by letting you brush their teeth.

Effective Tooth Brushing

- Guide your child's hand so they feel the correct movement.
- Use a mirror so your child can see exactly where the brush is cleaning their teeth.
- Make tooth brushing as fun as possible, using egg timers to time them for at least two minutes.
- Ensure they don't run around with a toothbrush in their mouth as this can be dangerous.

Taking Your Child To The Dentist

Once you've established a good tooth brushing routine at home, the next step is the first trip to the dentist. These tips can make this a lot easier.

Take your child to the dentist when they're as young as possible, and be sure to have taken them at least once by the time they're two. This is so they become familiar with the environment and get to know the dentist.

Taking your child to the dentist means that any health problems can be identified at an early stage. Just opening their mouths to have a look is useful practice for their first visit. When you visit the dentist try to be positive about it and make the trip fun. Avoid using negative clichés. This will help to stop them worrying about future visits.

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Portway Dental Practice

Oral Health

Taking Care Of Your Teeth
Healthy Life, Healthy Teeth
Good Habits for Kid's Teeth

Dental health in the UK among adults and children is better than ever before largely thanks to the widespread use of fluoride toothpaste, which helps to prevent and control decay.

The number of adults with none of their natural teeth has fallen from 37% in 1968 to 12% in 1998 (the last year for which figures were compiled). Children are also faring much better. 12 year olds in England have the best teeth in Europe and 6 out of 10 children start school without having experience of tooth decay.

The reason for this improvement in our dental health is because we're taking better care of our teeth.

If you want to be sure that you and your children have healthy teeth and to keep trips to the dentist to a minimum, there's a lot you can do.

First of all, use the correct toothbrush, toothpaste, mouthwash and floss.

A healthy lifestyle, including eating well, giving up smoking and limiting your alcohol intake is good for your whole body, including your teeth, gums and mouth.

Regular check-ups with your dentist is a key part of any dental health routine. For information on how to find an NHS dentist, who's eligible for free dental treatment and what to expect from your dentist, see the Department of Health leaflet 'NHS dentistry in England'.

Around 25% of the population are too scared to go for a check-up. This could mean you'll suffer from dental health problems that could have been spotted earlier or prevented. These problems can lead to damage which is harder, or even impossible, to repair.

HEALTHY LIFE, HEALTHY TEETH

Taking care of your general health as well as your teeth is the key to getting the perfect smile.

Brushing your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, flossing them daily and regular appointments with the dentist is a good start towards healthy teeth. Diet, smoking and drinking alcohol all have an effect on dental health too.

What you eat affects your whole body and the same rules that will keep the rest of you healthy work just as well for your teeth.

Sugar

Sugar may be sweet, but what it does to your teeth certainly isn't. Each time you eat or drink anything sugary, your teeth are under 'acid attack' for up to 1 hour after eating. This acid can bore a hole in the tooth and, in worst cases, expose the dentine (the softer layer inside your tooth), which can cause toothache. Try to say no to sweets, cakes, biscuits or anything with added sugar.

Fizzy Drinks

With or without sugar, fizzy drinks should be saved for special occasions as they can be quite destructive to teeth too. The bubbles are made by pumping gas into the drink to make it fizzy. The gas used is carbon dioxide, which is acidic when mixed with water.

Fruit & Vegetables

Eating 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day offers a whole host of health benefits, as well as providing you with the vitamins, nutrients and fibre you need. A portion is around 80g (about a handful). While eating fresh fruit is a great way to make up your 5 a day, steer clear of too much dried fruit and fresh fruit juice as they contain lots of sugar, which is bad for your teeth.

Bread, Pasta, Rice & Potatoes

Starchy foods such as these should make up around 1/3 of your daily diet. These foods are a good source of energy, and if you choose wholegrain varieties they're packed with fibre to keep you feeling fuller for longer, which helps you cut out those sugary snacks.

Bin The Booze

Excessive consumption of alcohol has been linked to an increased risk of developing mouth cancer. According to Cancer Research UK, 75-80% of mouth cancer patients say they frequently drink alcohol. Drinking 4 or more units of alcohol a day (4 units is 2 pints or less than 2 small glasses of wine) increases your risk of mouth cancer, and the more you drink above that level the higher the risk.

Alcohol can also erode the enamel on the outside of your teeth, leading to decay, which can mean a trip to the dentist for a filling. Think about that next time you're at the bar or having a drink at home.

TAKING CARE OF YOUR TEETH

Say No To Smoker's Teeth

Smoking is a real no if you want gleaming, healthy teeth. Smoking turns your teeth yellow, causes bad breath and increases your risk of gum disease, breathing problems and lung cancer.

If you smoke 20 or more cigarettes a day, you're 6 times more likely to develop mouth cancer. So giving up makes sense if you want to look and feel better. To help you quit smoking, NHS offers a free, friendly and effective service. For further information contact 0800 587 5833.

A Whiter Smile

If you want to keep your teeth as white as possible, cutting out the substances that can stain them is a good idea. Wine, cigarette smoke, tea and coffee can all discolour your teeth so keep them to a minimum or cut them out completely to stop your teeth becoming stained. This helps you to avoid excessive brushing and scouring to keep your teeth white.

Fluoride

Fluoride is a natural mineral that can be found in many foods and in all drinking water. The amount of fluoride in the water varies from area to area (your local water supplier can tell you the level of fluoride in your drinking water). The addition of fluoride to water has been researched for over 50 years and water fluoridation has been proven to reduce decay by 40-60%.

Most toothpastes now contain fluoride, and most people get their fluoride this way. Fluoride toothpaste is very effective in preventing tooth decay. It also reduces the amount of acid that the bacteria on your teeth produce. Children who have fluoride while their teeth are developing tend to have shallower grooves in their teeth so plaque can be removed more easily.

The amount of fluoride in toothpaste is usually enough to lessen the level of decay. In areas where water supply is fluoridated, fluoride toothpaste gives extra protection.

GOOD HABITS FOR KIDS TEETH

Help to ensure that your child enjoys the best dental health for life by starting good habits early, establishing a good dental health routine. From brushing their first tooth to that first trip to the dentist, it's important to take care of your children's teeth.

A key part of establishing good dental health is a good teeth cleaning routine. Follow these tips and you can help to keep your kids' teeth decay free.

You can start to brush your baby's gums with a soft toothbrush at bath time, or even let your baby have a go themselves under supervision. This establishes tooth brushing as part of their washing routine. Start brushing your baby's teeth with fluoride toothpaste as soon as the first milk tooth breaks through (usually around 6 months old). It's important to use fluoride paste as it helps to prevent and control tooth decay.