

## Looking after your baby's teeth

Information for patients, parents and carers

### Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio tape or computer disk, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please telephone the PALS desk on 01271 314090.

### Teething

Teething normally starts at about six months and continues until three years old but this can vary.

Babies can have problems with teething. They may drool more than usual, and not sleep well. If your child is uncomfortable when they are teething, offer them a cold teething ring or cold, clean wash cloth. If they have a fever, you can consult a doctor or health visitor.



### Healthy teeth

Breast feeding exclusively for six months provides the best nutrition for babies.

Use infant formula and cooled, boiled water if you are unable to breast feed.

You should not give a bottle to your baby for long periods or allow them to fall asleep with it. Do not put any sugary drinks or fruit juice in the bottle.

From six months your baby should be introduced to drinking from a cup. Use non-valve, free-flowing cups containing only breast or formula milk, or plain water.

Bottle feeding should be discouraged from one year onwards.

No sugar or salt should be added to your baby's food.

### Brushing baby's teeth

Start brushing your baby's teeth as soon as the first teeth come through.

Brush the baby's teeth when he/she is lying down or sitting in their chair to allow you to see better (see picture).



**'Avoid leaving the bottle during the night'**



(used with permission by NSW Department of Health, Sydney)

Do not wet the toothbrush before cleaning as this dilutes the toothpaste.

Children aged up to three years old should use a toothpaste containing at least 1000ppm of fluoride but use only a smear on the brush. **Do not let your child eat toothpaste.**

Brush the teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste when your baby is relaxed. Brushing last thing at night can help protect the teeth as fluoride in the toothpaste continues to work when your baby is asleep.

***‘Brush last thing at night and one other time with a fluoride toothpaste’***

## Tips

- Do not share toothbrushes.
- Replace the toothbrush when it shows signs of wear or every three months.

## Food and drink

- Lots of sugar in our diet comes from biscuits, cakes, sweets, chocolate, drinks and breakfast cereals.
- Acid is produced by bacteria in dental plaque when sugar is present, and it may cause holes to form in the teeth. It is important that you reduce how often your baby has sugary food or drinks.
- It is better not to add sugar or salt to baby’s food. Sugar can damage teeth.
- Even the ‘no added sugar’, low sugar or natural fruit juices can still decay teeth. These should not be added to a baby’s bottle or cup. Fizzy drinks should be avoided as they can cause decay and also dissolve the tooth’s surface (erosion).

## Dummies

Dummies can cause the teeth to grow out of line. If used, orthodontic dummies are preferable. Never dip the dummy into anything sweet.

## Read food labels

The kinds of sugar to avoid on labels are glucose, fructose, maltose, sucrose, maltodextrin and honey. Try to keep these to mealtimes.

## Sugar free medicines

Unfortunately some medicines contain sugar, which can cause tooth decay if given frequently for long periods of time.

Check with your doctor or pharmacist to see if a sugar-free alternative is available.

If possible, give medicines at mealtimes and not last thing at night.

## Visit your dentist regularly

It is important for you and your baby to visit your dentist at least once a year. They will check your teeth and gums to make sure they are healthy.

To find a local NHS dentist, call 03330 063 300 or 01392 822348, or email [accessdentalhelpline@nhs.net](mailto:accessdentalhelpline@nhs.net)



## Useful contact

### Exeter NHS Dental Access Centre

RD&E Hospital (Heavitree)  
Gladstone Road  
Exeter  
EX1 2ED  
Tel: 01392 405700

### Barnstaple NHS Dental Access Centre

Barnstaple Health Centre  
Vicarage Street  
Barnstaple  
EX32 7BH  
Tel: 01271 370562

## PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or e-mail [ndht.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ndht.pals@nhs.net). You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

## Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at [www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk).

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