

Frequently Asked Questions & Child Dental Health Advice

When will my child's teeth appear?

Their first teeth usually start to appear when they are around six months old. All 20 of their first teeth should appear by the age of thirty months. Their first permanent teeth will appear at about six years old, before their first baby teeth start to fall out at about six to seven years old. All permanent teeth should be in place by the age of fourteen, except the 'wisdom' teeth. These may appear any time between 18 and 25 years of age. All children are different and develop at different rates though. If you have any concerns, speak to their dentist at their next check-up.

When should I take my child for their first check-up?

As soon as their first tooth starts to appear, but no later than the age of one. This will also allow them to become familiar with the environment and get to know the dentist. The dentist can advise you on how to prevent decay and identify any oral health problems at an early stage. You should then bring your child for regular check-ups. This is usually every six months, unless advised otherwise by the dentist. If you have concerns in between, you can bring them for a check-up sooner than six months, simply contact the practice for an earlier appointment.

When do I start brushing my child's teeth, and how do I do this?

Start brushing your child's teeth twice a day as soon as their first tooth starts to appear (usually at around six months, but it can be earlier or later). For child teeth, a small, soft-bristled toothbrush is ideal to remove plaque and bacteria that cause cavities and can reach all areas of the mouth.

- Brush their teeth last thing at night before bed and on one other occasion during the day.
- Guide your child's hand so they can feel the correct movement.
- Use a mirror to help your child see exactly where the brush is cleaning their teeth.
- Make tooth brushing as fun as possible. Children often like to copy an adult, so brushing your teeth at the same time can encourage them to do the same.
- Use circular movements and try to concentrate on each section of the mouth at a time.
- Don't forget to brush gently behind the teeth and onto the gums.
- Don't let children run around with a toothbrush in their mouth, as they may have an accident and hurt themselves.
- Make sure children don't eat or lick toothpaste from the tube.

Children aged up to 3 years old:

- Parents or carers should brush the child's teeth.
- Apply only a smear of toothpaste to the brush. This toothpaste should have no less than 1,000 parts per million (ppm) fluoride, unless their dentist has advised otherwise. This toothpaste should be age-appropriate. Most supermarkets sell toothpaste manufactured for specific age-groups.

Children aged 3 to 6 years old:

- Parents or carers should brush the child's teeth.
- Apply a pea-sized amount of toothpaste to the brush. This toothpaste should have no less than 1,000 parts per million (ppm) fluoride, unless their dentist has advised otherwise. This toothpaste should be age-appropriate. Most supermarkets sell toothpaste manufactured for specific age-groups.
- The child should spit out excess toothpaste after brushing but not rinse. Rinsing toothpaste from the mouth can mean the fluoride doesn't work as well.

Children aged 7 and over:

- Use fluoride toothpaste containing between 1,350 parts per million (ppm) fluoride.
- The child should spit out excess toothpaste after brushing but not rinse. Rinsing toothpaste from the mouth can mean the fluoride doesn't work as well.
- Children aged 7 and over should be able to brush their own teeth, but it's still a good idea to watch them to ensure this is done properly.

How can I prevent tooth decay in my child?

The more often your child has sugary or acidic foods or drinks, the more likely they are to have tooth decay. If you want to give your child a snack, try to stick to cheese, vegetable and fruit. Try to limit how much dried fruit you give as it is high in sugar.

Don't give them drinks containing sugars, including fruit juices, between meals. Give them water or milk instead. For babies, don't add sugar to their drinks, or to foods when you introduce them to solids.

It is also worth remembering that some processed baby foods contain high volumes of sugar. Try checking the list of ingredients for the sugar content.

Regular tooth brushing and regular check-ups are essential to reduce the risk of tooth decay in children.

Should I worry about my child's dummy, or thumb sucking?

Only if they are still in the habit past the age of three, as this is the age where these habits may impact on their palate, bite and teeth alignment.

Teething

Most children suffer some pain during teething. Babies may have a high temperature when they are teething and their cheeks may look red and be warm to touch.

There are special teething gels that you can apply to help reduce the pain. You can apply teething gel using your finger, and gently massage onto your baby's gums. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions when applying teething gel.

If you are concerned, book your child in for a check-up at the dentist and they will be able to provide you with helpful tips and guidance. FREE Child check-ups at Hampton Dental Care are available to book online 24-hours a day via our website, hamptondental.co.uk.