



Smiley Shen encourages us to keep our teeth clean and healthy. He tells us that even our first set of teeth, our 'milk teeth', are really important.

Children use these to learn to eat, chew and speak. They are making the spaces for our adult teeth. If milk teeth are removed prematurely the gap that should be there for the adult tooth may disappear as the neighbouring milk teeth move into the gap. This can block the eruption of the adult permanent teeth. If milk teeth get damaged or decayed it can also damage the adult teeth underneath.

In Birmingham 30.2% (2024) of children have experience of dental decay (decayed, missing or filled teeth). This is higher than the average amount for the West Midlands and England.

Tooth decay can cause a wide range of physical, practical and emotional issues such as problems with eating affecting the quality of diet, poor speech development, low self-esteem and confidence and low attainment.

Brushing Teeth

It is important to keep our teeth clean. Follow these easy guidelines to make sure it is done correctly.

- Brush teeth for two minutes, twice a day (last thing at night before bed and on one other occasion), with a fluoridated toothpaste
- Clean all tooth surfaces and the gum line thoroughly. It should take around 2 minutes.
- Use an age appropriate toothbrush and toothpaste
- Do not rinse with water after brushing, just spit out any excess toothpaste

It is recommended to start cleaning a babies teeth around 6 months or when the first tooth erupts. Children under 7 should be helped or supervised by an adult to clean their teeth but this does not need to mean they cannot try cleaning their teeth themselves too.

Other Ways to Keep Teeth Healthy

Smiley Shen has advice on how to keep even the smallest teeth healthy.

Reduce intake of sugary foods and drinks

One of the most important things to do is to reduce the frequency and amount of sugary foods and drinks consumed. Each time something sugary is consumed it increases the risk of tooth decay. Keep them to a minimum and have them with meals when they are consumed.

Some foods and drinks are obviously high in sugar such as sweets, chocolate, cake, biscuits, fizzy drinks and juice drinks. However it is also important to look out for hidden sugars especially in foods that seem healthy or are marketed at children such as chocolate cereals, milk shakes, dried fruit and dried fruit products like winders.

Correct use of bottles and cups

Water and milk are the best drinks for children under 5 and it is important to ensure that children are drinking these from the correct bottles and cups for their age. See our bottle to cup information for more details here.

Visiting the Dentist

Visiting a dentist and attending regular check-ups is also an important way to keep teeth healthy. Children should be taken to the dentist from 6 months of age or when their first tooth erupts. It is important to have regular check-ups even if there are no obvious problems. Best of all NHS dental care is free for children under 18.

To find a local NHS dentist click here

Smiley Shen Says:

"Brush your teeth for two minutes, twice a day (remember the 2x2 rule) from 6 months of age or as soon as the first tooth erupts. Don't forget to visit the dentist regularly. Watch out for sugary foods and drinks and use age appropriate drinking vessels!"



Smiley Shen



How to brush your teeth

1



Use a soft motion. Start on the front teeth

2



Brush the outside of the side and back teeth

3



Brush the inside of the side and back teeth

4



Brush the tops of the side and back teeth

5



Brush the back of your front teeth. Then repeat the process for the top teeth.

