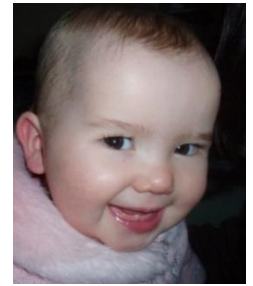


Looking after your baby's teeth and gums in their first year

Dental care

NHS dental treatment is free for all children, and mothers of babies under 1 year. It is usually recommended that you start taking your child to the dentist for regular check-ups with the rest of the family from around 6 months (when their first tooth comes through) [before they turn 1](#). If you don't have a dentist, you can use the [Find a Dentist](#) website. The dentist may record your baby's visits in their personal child health record (red book).



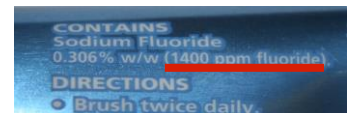
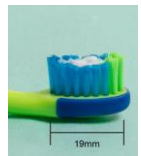
COVID-19 has made it difficult to book routine dental appointments, so you may need to wait a while before your baby has their first visit to the dentist. However, if anyone in your family needs to see a dentist urgently, for example because they have pain or swelling, please contact a local NHS dentist or NHS111.

Please do all you can to keep your baby's teeth and gums healthy. Toothbrushing and dietary habits start early - give your child the best possible start.



Toothbrushing

- Start brushing your baby's teeth as soon as they start to come through.
- Brushing removes plaque, a white sticky film containing bacteria which covers the teeth and gums. Brushing away the plaque keeps teeth and gums healthy.
- Use a baby toothbrush with a tiny smear of fluoride toothpaste. **Fluoride strengthens teeth and prevents tooth decay (holes).**
- Check the ingredients on the toothpaste packaging to make sure it contains no less than 1000 ppm fluoride. Use a toothpaste containing 1350-1500ppm fluoride for maximum prevention. Most 'own brand' supermarket toothpastes are suitable and more affordable.
- Don't worry if you don't manage to brush much at first. The important thing is to get your baby used to brushing their teeth as part of their daily routine. You can help by setting a good example and letting them see you brushing your own teeth.
- Brush all the surfaces of the teeth and gumline in small circles for around 2 minutes, just before bedtime and at another time that fits in with your routine.
- The easiest way to brush a baby's teeth is to sit them on your knee, with their head resting against your chest.
- Encourage your child to spit the toothpaste out afterwards. There's no need to rinse with water, as this will wash away the fluoride.
- Always supervise toothbrushing to make sure your child only has a smear of toothpaste on their brush, and they're not eating or licking toothpaste from the tube.
- Here is [video](#) to show you how to brush your baby's teeth.



Teething

- The first teeth (baby or milk teeth) to appear are usually the bottom front teeth (incisors) around 5-7 months, followed by the top front teeth. After that come the other incisors, first molars, canines and second molars. They should have 20 baby teeth by the time they are two and a half years old.
- Baby teeth sometimes come through with no pain or discomfort at all. At other times, you may notice:
 - your baby's gum is sore and red
 - one cheek is flushed
 - they are rubbing their ear
 - your baby is dribbling more than usual
 - they are gnawing and chewing on things a lot
 - they are more fretful than usual
- Some people think that teething causes other symptoms, such as diarrhoea and fever, but there's no evidence to support this. Please arrange for your baby to see a doctor if they seem unwell whilst cutting their teeth.
- Read [tips on how to help your teething baby](#). They may find it a relief to chew on something e.g. a teething ring. Teething gels don't usually help, but if you decide to try one, make sure it is suitable for a baby and sugar-free. Sugar-free paracetamol or ibuprofen can be given to relieve teething symptoms in babies and young children aged 3 months or older.



Feeding your baby

- Plaque bacteria in the mouth feed on [sugar](#) making acid which attacks teeth and causes tooth decay (holes). It's not just about the amount of sugar in sweet food and drinks, but how long and how often the teeth are in contact with sugar. Tooth decay is painful and affects eating and sleeping. Decayed baby teeth may have to be extracted (taken out) early, and this can cause the adult teeth to end up in the wrong position.



- The safest drinks for teeth are milk and water.
- Breast milk provides the best nutrition for babies and is the only food or drink babies need for around the first six months of their life. Formula milk is the only suitable alternative to breast milk.
- Breast feeding up to 12 months is associated with a decreased risk of tooth decay.
- It's OK to use bottles for expressed breast milk, formula milk, or cooled boiled water.
- Do NOT put juices or sugary drinks in bottles as this will bathe the teeth in sugar for long periods of time, quickly causing tooth decay.
- From 6 months old, you can offer babies drinks in a non-valved free-flowing cup (not a sippy cup as these still require the baby to suck like a bottle). Move completely from a bottle to a free-flow cup by 12 months.
- When your baby starts eating solid foods, encourage them to eat savoury food and keep drinks to milk and water. Check if there's sugar in pre-prepared baby foods (including the savoury ones). Rusks and baby drinks are not needed as part of a healthy diet and should be avoided.
- Avoid giving your baby biscuits, sweets or dried fruit. However, if you choose to include them, they should only be eaten at mealtimes. Milk and water are the safest drinks, but if you choose to give your baby juice, please dilute it 1-part juice to 10 parts water, and only give it in a free flow cup at mealtimes. The [Food Scanner app](#) from Change4Life can help you check how much sugar your family is having.
- You may see sugar written on food packaging using different words. Sucrose, glucose, dextrose, maltose, fructose and hydrolysed starch, invert sugar, syrup, honey, raw sugar, brown sugar, cane sugar, muscovado sugar and concentrated fruit juices are all sugars. Even if it is marketed as 'natural' or 'organic' sugar, it will be harmful to teeth.
- At bedtime or during the night, only give your child breast milk, formula or cooled boiled water.
- If your child needs medicine, ask your pharmacist or GP if there's a sugar-free option.



INGREDIENTS
CEREALS (34%) (WHEAT FLOUR, WHOLE OATS, WHEAT BRAN), GLUCOSE-FRUCTOSE SYRUP SUGAR, VEGETABLE OIL, HUMECTANT (GLYCEROL), MALTODEXTRIN, BLUEBERRY (2.5%), HONEY, DEXTROSE, STABILISERS (SODIUM ALGINATE, CELLULOSE, XANTHAN GUM, CARRAGEENAN, LOCUST BEAN GUM), CALCIUM CARBONATE, FLAVOURINGS, MODIFIED STARCH, DRIED SKIMMED MILK, SALT, COLOUR (ANTHOCYANINS), RAISING AGENT (POTASSIUM HYDROGEN CARBONATE), MALIC ACID, CALCIUM PHOSPHATE, CITRIC ACID, EMULSIFIER (E472b, E471), WHEAT GLUTEN, STARCH, NIACIN, IRON, VITAMIN B ₆ , RIBOFLAVIN (B ₂), THIAMIN (B ₁), FOLIC ACID, VITAMIN B ₁₂ .
ALLERGY INFORMATION: CONTAINS MILK, WHEAT AND OATS.

Dummies and thumb-sucking

- It's fine to give your baby a dummy but avoid using them after 12 months of age. Using dummies or thumb-sucking can cause the top and bottom front teeth to move to make space for the dummy/thumb, making a gap. Your child's speech development can also be affected.
- Discourage your child from running around, talking or making sounds with a dummy or their thumb in their mouth, and don't dip dummies in anything sweet, such as sugar or jam.
- Never suck your baby's dummy to 'clean' it as this will spread germs between you and your baby. Keep plenty of spares instead.



Useful resources to help you look after your baby's smile

- [Dental Check by One](#) (British Society of Paediatric Dentistry)
- [A practical guide to children's teeth](#) (British Society of Paediatric Dentistry)
- [Videos on healthy eating and growing up with healthy teeth](#) (Henry)
- [The Toothbrush Song from Hey Duggee](#) (CBeebies)
- [Brush DJ](#) - Toothbrushing App
- [How to care for the teeth of children aged 0-3 with Dr Ranj and Supertooth!](#) (CBeebies presenter)