

Give your
Child's Teeth
a healthy start



A healthy mouth is important for a healthy body.

Tooth decay is preventable.

Tooth decay remains one of the most common childhood diseases and is the main reason for hospital visits for children under 5 years that could be avoided.

Healthy habits established in early childhood can help protect your child's teeth for life.



This booklet is designed to give parents and carers simple tips to give your child's teeth a healthy start and to complement discussions with your child health and dental professionals.

For further information check out

- www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/oralhealth
- www.raisingchildren.net.au

Baby teeth are important

Healthy baby teeth are important for:

- Eating, biting, chewing and grinding foods.
- Normal speech development.
- Keeping the space for the adult teeth and guiding them into the right position.
- Developing jaw and mouth muscles.
- Children being healthy and feeling good about themselves.





Teething

Common signs can include irritability, increased dribbling, red cheeks and swelling of gums.

Fever (above 38°C) and diarrhoea are not signs of teething, so seek medical advice.

Teething tips:

- Gently massage the gums with clean fingers or a soft, wet cloth.
- Offer chilled (never frozen) teething rings or unsweetened rusks (after 6 months).

Did you know?

The back baby molar teeth can still be present in the mouth at 11–12 years of age.



6–12 months



7–14 months



12–19 months



16–23 months



20–33 months



Remember:

The times and order of when teeth erupt may vary.

By 3½ years your child should have 20 baby teeth.

Milk and water are the best drinks for children

Under 12 months

- Breast milk and formula are the best drinks for babies.
- Tap water should be boiled and cooled before drinking.
- Fruit juice and other sweet drinks are not recommended for children under 12 months of age.

Over 12 months

- Plain milk is a healthy drink for children.
- Offer tap water regularly throughout the day.
- Fluoride in tap water helps protect teeth from decay.
- It is better to offer whole fruit instead of juice.

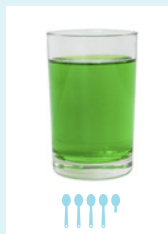
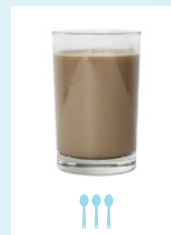


Children do not need sweet drinks

Sweet drinks increase the risk of tooth decay.

- Can of soft drink (375ml) = **11 teaspoons** of sugar
- Flavoured milk (250ml) = **3 teaspoons** of added sugar
- Can of cola (375ml) = **10 teaspoons** of sugar
- Fruit flavoured cordial (250ml)* = **4.5 teaspoons** of added sugar
- 100% Orange juice (250ml) = **5 teaspoons** of sugar
- Fruit drink (250ml) = **6.5 teaspoons** of sugar

* When made up as directed – approximately 2 tablespoons of cordial added to a cup of water.



Healthy snacks between meals

- Offer healthy snacks between meals such as fresh fruit, chopped vegetables, plain yoghurt with no added sugar, cheese, wholemeal or wholegrain sandwiches and wholegrain dry biscuits.
- Allow 1½ hours break between each meal and snack.



Sugar in children's snacks

- Offering sweet snacks can create a liking for sweet foods and drinks.
- Many snacks say “no added sugar.” No sugar is added, but the food may have a large amount of natural sugar from dried fruit, fruit juice or puree. If eaten often these foods can cause tooth decay.
- Only use food pouches sometimes or not at all. Touching and chewing food is important for children's development. Chewing food helps make the jaw muscles strong for talking and eating.



6 teaspoons
of sugar (2 bars)



3 teaspoons
added sugar



Fruit pouches are
high in natural sugars.



2 teaspoons
of sugar (2 biscuits)

Healthy meals

- The best meals for babies are those made at home from simple ingredients with no added sugar, honey or salt.
- From 12 months, children can enjoy a wide variety of healthy foods similar to the rest of the family.
- Touching, chewing, tasting and texture experience is very important for development.



Put baby to bed without a bottle

- Always put your baby to sleep without a bottle.
- When babies fall asleep with a bottle the milk stays in the mouth and on the teeth. This can cause tooth decay, especially on the upper front teeth.



Dummies

- If you decide to use a dummy wait until breast feeding is established.
- Don't put anything sweet on a dummy.
- Dummies or teats should not be placed in your own mouth before they are given to your baby.
- Using a dummy during play hours prevents baby from babbling and sound making, which is needed for speech development.
- A child can be helped to give up the dummy from one year of age.
- Thumb and finger sucking beyond 4 years can affect the position of teeth and your child's speech. If concerned talk to a dental professional.



Introduce a cup at 6 months

Learning to hold and drink from a cup is an important new skill baby needs to learn. Aim to stop using the bottle by 12 months. Start by swapping some bottle feeds for a cup feed.



After 12 months children do not need bottles

- Bottle should be phased out by 12 months.
- Children by this age can drink from a cup.
- Children can drink full cream milk and water from 12 months and do not need formula.



Clean teeth as soon as they come through

Start with a damp soft cloth to gently wipe the gums and teeth morning and night.

Use a small, soft toothbrush and help your child to brush their teeth morning and night.

- Under 18 months use water only.
- 18 months – 6 years use a pea sized amount of child fluoride toothpaste.
- Children should use a pea sized amount of adult toothpaste from 6 years of age.

(Unless a dental or child health professional suggests something else)



How to brush children's teeth



1. From 18 months to 6 years use a pea sized amount of low fluoride toothpaste. If you do not have fluoride in your tap water, talk to your dental professional about the right toothpaste to use.



2. Sit your child on your lap facing away from you or sideways to you, or stand behind the child. Tilt child's head back against your body so you can see all the surfaces of the teeth.



3. Brush in gentle circles on the inside and outside surfaces of the teeth and gums.
4. Use light back and forth motion on the chewing surfaces of the teeth.



5. Encourage your child to spit out the toothpaste and not to swallow it. Do not rinse.



Children will need help or supervision to brush their teeth until 7–8 years of age.

Make a dental check-up by 12 months

Tooth decay is easy to avoid with good teeth cleaning habits and tooth friendly eating and drinking and regular dental care.

Work with your local dental team to make sure your baby's smile and health is protected for life.

Oral Health Services Tasmania provides free dental care to all children under 18 years of age when you present your Medicare Card.

To make an appointment at your local public Oral Health Services Tasmania dental clinic call:

1300 011 013

Or see your private dentist.



Baby teeth can decay as soon as they appear

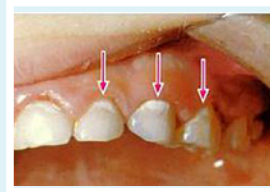
You can check for signs of decay by lifting your child's top lip. If you notice any changes please see a dental professional quickly.

Early stages of tooth decay can be reversed if your child is seen by a dental professional early.

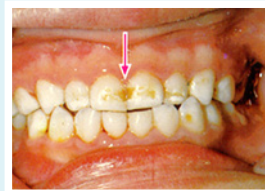
But tooth decay is preventable!



Healthy mouth and gums



Early stage decay



Brown spots that don't rub off

Dental abscess



Advanced decay or infection
URGENT TREATMENT IS REQUIRED.

A healthy mouth is important for the whole family!

- Be a role model for your children by brushing your teeth morning and night.
- Every family member must have their own toothbrush.
- Help your child to brush their teeth until 7–8 years of age.
- Encourage everyone in the family to have a dental check-up and get any decay treated.
- Make time for a dental check up if you are pregnant or thinking about getting pregnant.



Acknowledgements

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Need more information?

www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/oralhealth

www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/healthykids

www.raisingchildren.net.au



