

EAST AYRSHIRE

**Health & Social Care**  
Partnership



# Oral health advice for parents and carers of children

## Information for you



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## **Steps for good oral health:**

- Keep sugary snacks and drinks to mealtimes
- Brush teeth twice a day using 1450ppm fluoride toothpaste
- Visit the dentist regularly

## **When should I start brushing children's teeth?**

It is important to start brushing as soon as a child's first tooth appears to help prevent tooth decay and gum disease.

## **What will cause children's teeth to decay?**

A sticky layer called plaque is constantly forming on everyone's teeth. The layer of plaque contains thousands of germs and bacteria. When we eat or drink things that contain sugar, the bacteria changes this sugar into acid, which we call an acid attack. This acid then damages our teeth. This is called tooth decay.

## **What about snacks for children?**

There are some snack foods and drinks that can be harmful to children's teeth if they are eaten frequently. These include soft drinks, sweets, chocolate, cream-filled and chocolate biscuits, sugary pastries, sugary desserts and sugary yoghurts. These types of food are best kept to mealtimes.

## **What are healthy snacks?**

Some good ideas for healthy snacks between meals:

- **Mouth-sized chunks of fruit**

- Raw sticks of vegetables
- Toast with a little margarine or low fat spread, cold meat, cheese or tuna
- Bread sticks – on their own or with a dip or soft cheese
- Natural yoghurt or plain fromage frais with fruit
- English muffins, plain, potato or cheese scones, crumpets and pancakes with a little margarine or low fat spread

## **What drinks should I choose for children?**

Plain milk and plain water are the only safe drinks for teeth.

We recommend that these drinks are the drinks you give between meals.

## **Is it okay to give children sugary snacks and drinks?**

Keep all sugary snacks and drinks to a minimum and give them only at mealtimes. This means we are reducing the number of acid attacks on children's teeth. Using a drinking straw will also help to reduce contact with teeth. Sweetened juices, squashes and all types of fizzy drinks are a major cause of tooth decay and should only be taken at mealtimes.

Beware of snacks with hidden sugars, such as cereal bars, raisins and maize snacks.  
Keep these to mealtimes.

## How will I recognise these hidden sugars?

It is important to read your food labels. Some foods don't have the word 'sugar' in the ingredients list on their packaging, but still have sugar in them – it's just labelled in a different way. Hidden sugars usually end in 'ose' and the nearer the start of the list they are, the bigger the amount included: sucrose, dextrose, maltose, fructose, lactose, glucose, honey.

### Cereal bar

#### Ingredients

WHOLE GRAIN ROLLED OATS, SUGAR, SUNFLOWER OIL, WATER, HONEY, SALT, MOLASSES, EMULSIFIER, SOYA LECITHIN, RAISING AGENT, SODIUM BICARBONATE.

#### Nutrition Information

Typical Values	Per 100 g
Energy	1934 kJ/460 kcal
Protein	8.3 g
Carbohydrate	70.4 g
of which sugars	27.0 g
Fat	16.1 g
of which saturates	2.0 g
Fibre	6.2 g
Sodium	0.3 g



For tips on how to brush children's teeth please see the 'Oral health – Top ten tips for teeth' leaflet.

## Dentists – how can they help?

We would recommend that you register babies with a dentist soon after birth. Take babies along with you to your own dental appointments. This will help them to get

used to the sights, sounds and smells associated with the dental surgery. Remember dental treatment is free to all children and young people up to the age of 26.

Visit your dentist twice a year (every six months) or as often as your dentist recommends, for oral health care and advice.

**At weekends if a child has a dental emergency contact NHS 24 on 111.**

**For weekday emergencies for children not registered with a dentist contact the dental advice line on 01292 616990.**

## **The Childsmile Programme**

Childsmile is a national programme designed to improve the oral health of children in Scotland and reduce inequalities, both in dental health and access to dental services. It is funded and supported by the Scottish Government and has four main parts:

### **Childsmile Core - including the Toothbrushing Programme**

**Childsmile Practice**

**Childsmile Nursery**

**Childsmile School**

**For more information and local contact details –**

**[www.child-smile.org](http://www.child-smile.org)**

**If you have any concerns please contact your own dentist first**

or

the **Dental Advice Line** for urgent care or advice on weekdays, 8.30am to 6pm 01292 616990

or

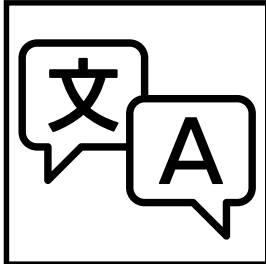
**NHS 24** for dental emergencies out-of-hours 111

A list of dentists who are available for patients to access can be found on our NHS Public Website or Dental App – see front of page of this leaflet for details

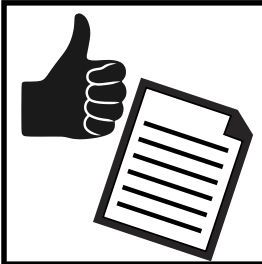
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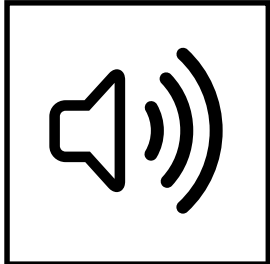
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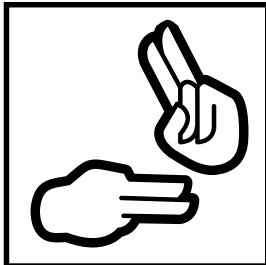
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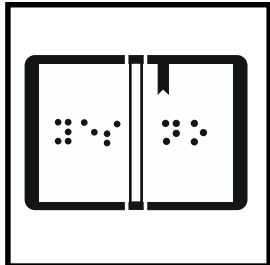
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