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Oral health advice for teenagers

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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

A healthy smile is important:

- For making good first impressions
- To boost your confidence
- For clear communication
- For eating and enjoying food

If you don't look after your teeth and gums you can suffer from:

- Bad breath
- Tooth decay
- Tooth loss
- Gum disease
- Dental erosion

Healthy diet

A varied healthy diet is important for general health and just as important for good oral health. Keep sugary snacks to mealtimes only and in between meals consider eating:

- Fresh fruit
- Breadsticks
- Rice cakes
- Bagels
- Crumpets, pancakes or plain scones with a little margarine or low fat spread
- Vegetable sticks
- Plain popcorn

Another helpful hint is to chew sugar free gum for around 20 minutes after meals – this stimulates saliva flow which naturally cleanses the mouth and reduces acidity levels.



Drinks

Plain water and plain milk are the safest drinks for teeth.

Fruit juices are a good source of vitamins and minerals, but safer for teeth if you keep them to mealtimes. This is due to the acidic content which can contribute to dental erosion.

All fizzy drinks are acidic and cause damage to teeth. Although diet drinks don't contain sugar they contain acid and will still cause dental erosion.

Erosion is when acid wears away tooth enamel (the outside part of the tooth). This can cause teeth to look discoloured and become sensitive. It is most commonly caused by regular consumption of acidic drinks. To reduce the risk of erosion, use a straw when drinking fizzy drinks and juices as

this reduces contact with the teeth. Limiting these drinks to mealtimes will also reduce the risk. Where possible, avoid brushing immediately after eating or drinking anything acidic. Remember to try and avoid adding sugar to hot drinks.

Braces

Some people are unhappy with how their teeth are arranged or how their teeth bite together. Braces can straighten and move teeth to improve their function and appearance. There are three main types of braces:



- Fixed braces (often referred to as train-tracks) which are cemented onto the teeth
- Removable braces – you can take these out for cleaning. They can sometimes be used before or along with a fixed brace
- Retainers – these are worn after the completion of orthodontic treatment to hold the teeth in their new positions

Most treatments take between 12 and 24 months, and once your brace is fitted it will be adjusted regularly to make sure it is working properly. It is important to keep your appointments, which may be every four to six weeks.

Your mouth is very sensitive to change and it may take a few days to get used to wearing your brace. You may experience discomfort to your lips and cheeks at first, but if this continues speak to your orthodontist.

Eating may be difficult with your brace, so avoid sticky chewy foods and chewing gum which will damage your brace. You may also find it helpful in the first few days to stick to softer foods. Try cutting up harder foods, such as apples, as this makes them easier to eat. Sometimes hard foods can break orthodontic wires and brackets, so take care when eating them. Always rinse removable braces after eating.

For your braces to be a success it is essential that your oral hygiene is of the highest standard and many orthodontists recommend using a daily fluoride mouthwash to reduce the chance of decay around your brace.

Oral hygiene

Brush teeth and gums twice a day with a pea sized amount of 1450 ppm fluoride toothpaste – unless advised otherwise by your dentist..

Use a small headed toothbrush with medium bristles.

Brush for two minutes in the morning after breakfast and at night before bed.

Use a dry toothbrush as the bristles are firmer when dry and clean more effectively.

Spit out toothpaste but don't rinse with water – this allows the fluoride in your toothpaste to be absorbed by your teeth and help strengthen enamel.

Only use alcohol free fluoride mouthwash (unless instructed by your dentist) and use at a different time from brushing.

Use interdental aids (such as floss) once a day to help remove bits of food and plaque from between your teeth.

Mouth piercings

People with mouth piercings are more prone to infection and inflammation of tissues in the mouth. Piercings can chip and break teeth and can affect speech. Eating and swallowing can also be difficult and oral hygiene can be affected.



If you are considering a mouth piercing make sure you look after your teeth and mouth and clean around the pierced area effectively.

Mouth guards

You should wear a mouthguard during contact sports, such as hockey or rugby. This will help protect against broken and damaged teeth. Speak to your dentist about having a mouthguard made specifically for you. These will offer more effective protection than the type you can buy in the shops, which often don't fit well.

Smoking and drinking alcohol

Smoking cigarettes can cause tooth staining, bad breath, can lead to gum disease and tooth loss and more seriously mouth cancer. E-cigarettes are not risk free, but based on current evidence, they have a much lower risk than tobacco

Alcohol can increase your chances of tooth decay and erosion due to the sugar and acid content. Alcohol is also a contributing factor to mouth cancer, and smoking and drinking combined presents a much higher risk.

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

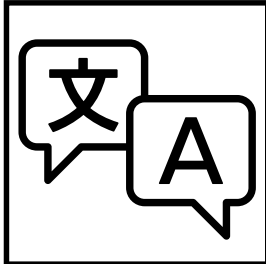
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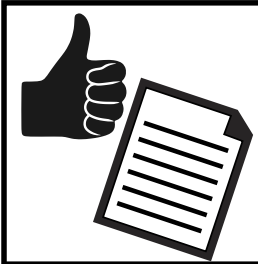
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For other oral health leaflets visit our website:
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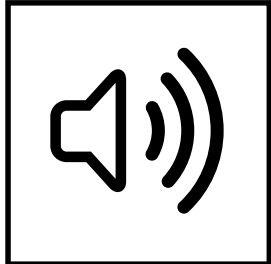
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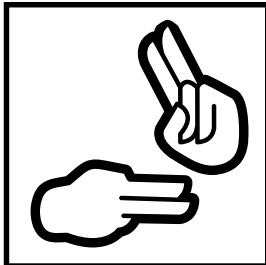
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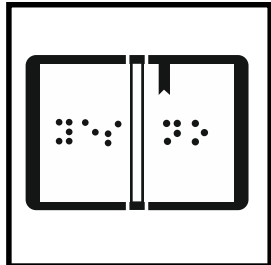
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