

# Oral health

## Looking after your teeth for life

To have a great smile and look good, you need to look after your teeth. Tooth decay occurs when bacteria in the mouth break down sugar to cause an acid attack, which then dissolves the teeth. How often we eat sugary foods or drinks can affect how much the teeth decay.

Reduce the risk of tooth decay by having fewer sugary foods and drinks less often. Switch to water and milk where possible. Swop fizzy drinks for sugar free drinks and drink through a straw to avoid erosion.

Brushing twice a day with a family toothpaste will prevent decay and keep your breath fresh. Avoid dog breath by brushing away the plaque carefully twice daily and especially at night, no one wants to kiss someone with stinky breath! Brush right up to and under all the gum margins - everywhere!

If you have decay in your tooth visit the dentist straight away. Missing or bad teeth look really bad!

Some people worry about the colour of their teeth. Teeth will appear whiter if they are clean and against slightly darker lip gloss or make up.

### Dentist says

- Cut down on sugar particularly between meals.
- Brush twice daily for 2 minutes, especially last thing at night.
- Use a fluoride toothpaste and spit don't rinse (so fluoride is not diluted).
- Visit a Dentist regularly.
- Avoid smoking and heavy drinking.

### Oral health and young people

Smoking has a bad effect on your mouth. It turns teeth yellow, causes bad breath and damages gums and increases risk of mouth cancer. Illegal drugs can also damage teeth and gums.

Keeping sugary foods to mealtimes will help reduce dental decay. Eating disorders and repeated vomiting can lead to tooth problems.

Braces can trap plaque. A special brush can be recommended by your Dentist.

Sexual practices such as unprotected oral sex can lead to getting a virus which can lead to oral cancer.

Mouth piercing can cause mouth damage, infections, nerve damage and speech problems. Damage to the teeth can occur.

### Who can help?

- School Nurse
- GP

- Dentist

## Contact

- [www.dentalhealth.org](http://www.dentalhealth.org)
- [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)