

DENTAL DECAY IN CHILDREN



Dear

This leaflet has been given to you by your dentist as your child has been identified to be either at a high risk of dental decay or is suffering from dental decay. Please take the time to read this information sheet so that you may understand the causes, symptoms and implications of decay.

The information in this leaflet has been derived from the Delivering Better Oral Health evidence based Toolkit written by Public Health England (2014).

WHAT IS DENTAL DECAY? (CARIES)

- The term caries, more commonly known as decay, refers to a condition in which the hard tissues of the tooth/teeth are destroyed by bacteria found in plaque on the teeth.
- The bacteria in the plaque, when left undisturbed on the teeth, use sugars in our diet to create acids which then dissolve and destroy the mineral components within the tooth structure causing holes in one or more teeth.
- In the past 3 years the number of children between the ages of five and nine needing hospital treatment for dental problems rose by more than 3000.
- 25,812 children in the UK between the ages of five and nine were admitted to hospital to have multiple teeth removed under general anaesthetic.

CAUSES

- 1) **Oral hygiene** – Bacteria only have the time to do damage teeth when they are able to attach to the tooth for more than 24 hours. This is why cleaning your child's teeth twice a day to remove the plaque bacteria with a toothbrush and fluoride containing tooth paste is critical to the prevention of decay.
- 2) **Diet** – Sugary and starchy food and drinks in the diet are used by the bacteria to cause decay. A lot of food contains added sugar and therefore you must control what your child eats throughout the day to prevent decay.
- 3) **Medicines** – certain medicines are high in sugar content and can also cause your child's mouth to become dry. If the mouth is dry, the saliva which has the ability to remove the acids which are damaging the teeth, cannot do so. This will increase the risk of decay.

IMPLICATIONS

- Decay causes cavities/holes in the teeth which can lead to:
 - Food trapping in the cavity.
 - Tooth ache – sleepless nights, crying and loss of appetite.
 - Nerve death and abscesses as well as infections and swelling of the face.
 - Bad breath, bad taste and teeth looking grey/brown/black in colour.
- Decay can lead to the need for dental fillings, root canal treatment and even extractions with the use of local anaesthetic injections or even sedation/general anaesthetic.
- This is of course likely to be very distressing for both you and your child.

DETECTION AND TREATMENT

It is important to realize that the best way to deal with dental decay is to prevent it from happening in the first instance. This is the responsibility of the child's parents and can't be blamed on other people.

A child is often too young to understand the concept of decay and therefore it is the parents' responsibility to educate their child. We will of course help the parents to do this.

- REGULAR DENTAL CHECK UPS RECOMMENDED BY YOUR DENTIST. ASK ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE. PLEASE ATTEND ALL APPOINTMENTS ON TIME.
- BRUSH THE TEETH TWICE A DAY USING A FLUORIDE TOOTH PASTE. THIS MUST BE DONE EVERYDAY WITHOUT FAIL. BRUSHING SHOULD BE DONE FIRST THING IN THE MORNING AND AT LEAST ONE OTHER TIME DURING THE DAY (USUALLY LAST THING BEFORE BEDTIME).
- UP UNTIL THE AGE OF 6 - CHILDREN SHOULD USE AGE APPROPRIATE TOOTHPASTE (UNLESS TOLD DIFFERENTLY BY YOUR DENTIST). THE PARENT SHOULD BE BRUSHING THE CHILD'S TEETH FOR THEM. AFTER THE AGE OF 6 - A CHILD CAN USE AN ADULT FLUORIDE CONTAINING TOOTH PASTE.
- CONTROL THE DIET – LIMIT THE NUMBER OF TIMES YOUR CHILD EATS SUGARY OR STARCHY FOODS AND DRINKS TO A MAXIMUM OF ONCE A DAY. THIS SHOULD BE WITH A MEAL AND SNACKING ON SUGARY FOODS AND DRINKS BETWEEN MEALS SHOULD BE STOPPED.
- ENSURE ANYONE LOOKING AFTER YOUR CHILDREN IS EDUCATED IN THE PREVENTION OF DENTAL DECAY.
- SUBSTITUTE SUGARY DRINKS WITH WATER OR SUGAR FREE SQUASH AND DO NOT PUT SUGARY DRINKS IN YOUR BABY'S BOTTLE OR ON THEIR PACIFIER.

[Download the Change4Life Sugar Smart App on the App store now.](#)



Please sign and date below to confirm that you were provided with this information sheet.

NAME:

SIGNATURE:

DATE: