

# Oral Health Information Sheet for Parents

## An Overview of Oral Health

Oral hygiene is very important in achieving overall good oral health. This is also becoming a key aspect on which the EYFS is focusing on in 2021. It is beneficial for us all to have a clear understanding of how to support our children with oral health.

It is said that 25% of children under the age of 5 experience tooth decay. This can be a result of one or more of the following reasons:

- Eating a poor diet
- Brushing teeth less than twice a day with fluoride toothpaste
- Coming from a deprived background

It is therefore important for us to support children with oral health, as their first experiences can have a great impact on the rest of their lives. By supporting them, we can teach them about their mouths, introduce them to good habits and normalise dental visits, helping to put them at ease and gain trust.

One of our aims in supporting oral health is to help children achieve the five "Every Child Matters" outcomes:

- 1 Staying safe
- 2 Being healthy
- 3 Enjoying and achieving
- 4 Making a positive contribution
- 5 Achieving economic well-being

By working in partnership with parents and local authorities we can successfully promote oral health.



## **Tooth Decay in Early Years**

There are three key points that we should remember to help prevent tooth decay:

- Reduce the consumption of foods which have a high sugar content
- Brush teeth twice a day
- Take your child to the dentist as soon as their first tooth erupts and attend check ups every 6 months thereafter

Health visitors and midwives encourage mothers to breastfeed for up to 12 months which supports the evidence of decreased risk of tooth decay in children. To further support this within our settings, we provide a private area in which feeding mothers can use to feed their children. We also encourage expressed milk within our settings.

## **How Playschool Nursery Supports Oral Health in Day-to-Day Practice**

At Playschool Nursery we provide all of our children with nutritional and healthy meals throughout the day which limits sugary snacks, and we ensure that the children have access to fresh drinking water all day. We also provide children with milk between meal times and encourage children to use open cups or free flow beakers from 6 months old, as prolonged bottle use can cause bottle tooth decay.

Around our settings you will find an oral health display which helps us promote good oral hygiene habits to the children within our care as well as our practitioners. We also use this information sheet to work together with parents in keeping our children's mouths healthy.

## **What oral health related activities do we provide and how do they benefit the children's development?**

As an Early Years provider it is important to us that the activities the children engage in help to further extend their development in all areas of learning. Below we have outlined how our oral health related activities benefit our children across all seven areas of learning.

### **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**

The children have the opportunity to build on their relationships by coming together to carry out activities. This could be during many activities such as dentist role play, sharing their experiences through circle time and other group activities. They will learn about feelings as they consider how visiting the dentist can make them feel. We carry out our oral health activities to help the children gain self-confidence when brushing their teeth or visiting the dentist.

### **Physical Development**

Teaching the children health and self-care is a big part of our day-to-day practice. We teach the children how to brush their teeth through discussions and through practice as they enjoy the dentist project pack. This project pack contains a set of large teeth and toothbrushes which the children can use to practice their teeth brushing skills. The practitioners will help them to gain an understanding that oral health is an important part of their daily hygiene routine. We also teach the children about healthy and unhealthy foods and provide food activities that allow them to taste healthy options.

## Communication and Language

We encourage the children to speak about their experiences when visiting the dentist, which is great for their listening skills, understanding skills and speaking skills. The children also enjoy asking each other questions and listening to what their friends have to say. Younger children will learn new words and be able to match the words to objects with context, for example, toothbrush and toothpaste.

## Literacy

The children have the opportunity to enjoy occupational themed books that are both fiction and non-fiction. This gives the children the opportunity to gain an understanding of oral hygiene routines and some fun facts about teeth. They can also listen to stories about taking a trip to the dentist which will help them understand what to expect as well as put their mind at ease. Some of the older children will also practice their writing skills as we encourage mark making in role play.

## Mathematics

The children enjoy using the set of large teeth to count how many teeth are in their mouths. This is quite a high number so they often need support with this, but it's still a great way for them to gain an awareness of number names, which they will often repeat. The children also learn how much toothpaste they need to use on their brush. We encourage the children to use the 2 minute sand timer when role playing or brushing the large set of teeth.

## Understanding the world

Children are encouraged to explore the role of both the dentist and the patient through their role play situation, which they always enjoy. We teach the children what a toothbrush is and what it is used for. The children can also use technology to watch videos about the dentist as well as enjoy some interactive stories. The children are encouraged to share their experiences of trips to the dentist, which will often involve them talking about the people who are close to them.

## Expressive Art and Design

Children can role play dentist and patients which they always enjoy. This encourages them to play alongside each other and to use their imaginations. We teach children new songs, one of which is about how to brush your teeth. The children also engage in lots of mark making activities relating to oral health and healthy eating and will enjoy exploring different textures as they do this.



## Top Tips for Children's Oral Health

- Eating habits are shaped when children are very young and can last a lifetime
- Eating healthy food that is low in sugar helps to prevent tooth decay and also encourages good general health
- Eating chopped fruit and vegetables does not cause tooth decay. Bread, breadsticks, rice cakes, cheese, natural yoghurt or fromage frais are all tooth friendly snacks
- Dried fruit given as a snack (such as raisins) increases the risk of tooth decay
- Dipping dummies into honey or sugary drinks can cause tooth decay
- Water and milk are the best tooth-friendly drinks
- Freshly prepared fruit juice and smoothies should be given only once a day and with a meal as they contain a high concentration of sugar
- Ask for sugarfree medicines where possible
- Introduce your child to a free-flowing beaker from 6 months of age and aim to discontinue the use of bottles at 12 months
- Children aged under 3 should use just a smear of toothpaste
- Children aged 3 to 6 years of age should use a pea sized amount of toothpaste

## Finding a Dentist

If you are unsure of your local family dentist, you can use the NHS website to find your closest one:

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist>

## Further Guidance, Helpful Information and Videos on Oral Health for Early Years

If you require any support or guidance with oral health at home, please do not hesitate to speak with the Nursery Manager who will try their best to support you and provide you with further information.

Below we have also provided you with some useful links that will further support you with maintaining good oral health for your child.

**Oral Health Foundation** have a team of fully trained experts. You can contact them by visiting their website:

<https://www.dentalhealth.org>

Or calling them on +44(0) 1788 546 365

## Additional Resources

[NHS Toothbrushing Tips](#)

[Hertfordshire Family Centre Service](#)

[Video - How to brush your teeth properly for children](#)

[More tips for parents](#)

[NHS - Live Well](#)

[Sugar Swap for Children](#)

