

Oral Health

A healthy mouth is important for speech, eating and feeling confident. Research has shown that poor oral health can affect general health as it is linked to diabetes, strokes, heart disease, obesity, lung disease and dementia.

Caring for natural teeth

- Brush teeth and gums twice a day for two minutes
- Use a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste containing 1350-1500ppm (parts per million)
- The brush at bedtime is the most important
- Clean all surfaces of the teeth to remove plaque and food
- Spit but do not rinse with water at the end of two minutes brushing, this allows the fluoride in the toothpaste to repair and strengthen teeth
- Mouthwash may be used at a separate time to brushing
- • Keep sugary food and drinks to mealtimes to reduce the risk of tooth decay
- Visit the dentist regularly



Caring for someone else's teeth

Tooth brushing does not necessarily have to take place in a bathroom and it may be more comfortable sitting in bed or in a chair. Remember to support the head if needed.

- Be prepared—get everything you need ready before you start
- Explain that you are going to clean their teeth, and stand in a position that is comfortable for you and them
- Check they are comfortable and agree a signal to stop if and when they need a break
- Check the mouth before you start for ulcers or areas that may be sensitive
- Relax lips and brush all tooth surfaces in a methodical way, one tooth at a time including cleaning the tongue
- Be aware of any loose teeth and brush with care
- If gums bleed do not stop brushing, continue to brush normally
- Encourage them to spit after brushing, it is not necessary to rinse

If you notice any changes or the person is in pain always seek advice from a dentist.

A dentist can advise on how to carry out effective oral care. High street dentists can be found on the NHS choices website: www.nhs.uk/service-search.

If you require a dentist in an emergency or out of hours call 111

Caring for a mouth that has dentures

- Remove any partial or full dentures
- Look out for red or sore areas caused by the dentures, and seek professional advice if there is no improvement
- Remember the mouth and any remaining teeth, will still need cleaning even if wearing a denture
- Dentures should be cleaned daily
- Brush all surfaces to remove plaque, paying particular attention to the fitting surfaces using a denture crème or un-perfumed soap
- After thorough brushing, use a denture soaking solution for 20-30 minutes. Rinse the denture and store in plain, fresh water
- Dentures should be left out overnight to let the mouth rest and reduce the risk of a mouth infection



Partial Denture



Complete Dentures

Dentures are expensive and fragile, clean them over a sink filled with water or over a towel to help prevent breakages

What does a healthy mouth look like?



Gums

The gums are pink, firm and do not bleed when brushed



Teeth

The tooth surfaces are sound with no build up of plaque
Any fillings are intact and no obvious decayed or broken teeth



Skin

The skin in the mouth is pink with no sign of ulceration, swelling, red or white patches



Tongue

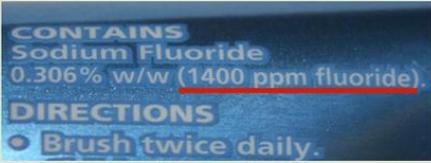
The tongue is pink and smooth



Saliva

The floor of the mouth is moist with saliva

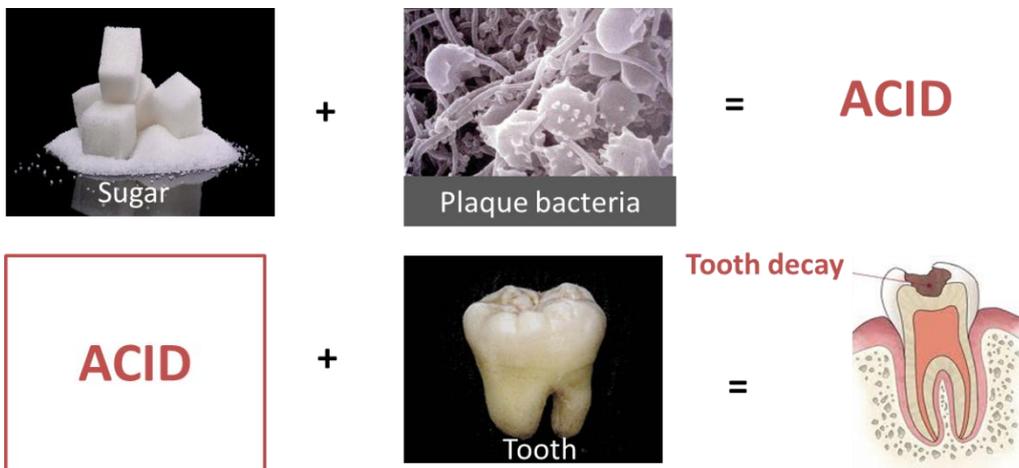
Resources for providing effective care

Toothpaste products	Issue	Care needs
	Natural teeth	Brush twice a day with a standard fluoride toothpaste, with fluoride between 1350 – 1500 ppm (parts per million)
	Dry mouth Sensitive mouth Swallowing problems	Use an unflavoured paste Use a low foaming paste (SLS free)
	Sensitive teeth Acid erosion	Use a toothpaste for sensitive teeth.
	Extensive decay	Use a high fluoride prescribed toothpaste. Remember to treat this paste as a medicine, due to the high fluoride content.
	Gum bleed on brushing (gum disease)	Consider using a product with chlorhexidine, as long as there is no allergy

Toothbrush products	Issue	Care needs
	Natural teeth	Use a small headed brush with a pea sized amount of paste. For a sensitive mouth use a soft brush (specialist brush or child's toothbrush)
	Limited manual dexterity Maintain independence	If tolerated use an electric brush, it is easier to hold and is effective at cleaning teeth.
	Access is limited	Consider a specialist brush such as 'collis curve' or 'superbrush' which brushes all three surfaces in one pass.

Supporting healthy eating and drinking

Whilst oral hygiene is important for good oral health, so is providing healthy tooth friendly foods and drinks. The general message is to keep sugary foods and drinks to mealtimes only; this reduces the amount of times teeth are exposed to sugar and the potential damage it causes.



However for some individuals this may not be possible (e.g. if taking high energy sip feeds and fortified diets), so the oral care for these people is of even greater importance.

It is vital to look after the mouth as this will make it more comfortable to eat and drink.

Tooth friendly snacks:

- Fresh fruits and vegetable sticks with a dip
- Savoury breads such as crumpets, bagels, toast, try adding a low fat spread or cheese to them
- Plain yoghurts, try adding fresh fruit to them

How much to drink

The Eatwell Guide recommends that everyone drinks 6-8 cups/glasses of fluid a day; how much a person should drink will depend on medical history, mobility, age, weight and also the climate. It is important to offer at least 7 beverages a day.

What to drink

Water is the best type of fluid to drink. Also lower-sugar or sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee. Fruit juice and smoothies do count towards fluid consumption but they contain free sugars that can damage teeth, so limit these drinks to a combined total of one glass (150ml) per day and preferably drink it at a mealtime. Milk is a nutritious fluid and a good source of calcium which can help to maintain good bone health. Soup and jelly also contribute to fluid intake.