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Prevention of Decay

Information for Patients

At Hexham Dental Clinic we want you to have healthy teeth free from decay. Your dentist will assess your risk of developing decay and give specific advice but below is some general advice. This information is based on the department of health guidance 2nd edition, published July 2009.

General Advice

Tooth decay (also known as caries) is a disease process that causes breakdown of the teeth to cause cavities. Decay can effect children or adults but children are particularly susceptible. Often the decay process is pain-free until the decay reaches the nerve of the tooth so regular dental examinations are advised to diagnose decay early.

- **Both bacteria and sugar are required for decay to occur in a tooth.** Sugar is turned into acid by plaque bacteria. This acid destroys the tooth causing cavities. Tooth brushing and flossing help to reduce the number of bacteria which helps prevent decay. However we are unlikely to be able to completely remove all the bacteria from our mouth so we also need to reduce the amount of sugars in our diet to prevent decay.
- **Every time sugar enters your mouth your teeth will decay for a period of at least 20 minutes.** By reducing the *frequency* of consumption of sugary foods and drinks you can help reduce the amount of decay you will experience. Help avoid decay by reducing your sugary snacks between meals and avoid for at least 1 hour before bedtime.
- **Many foods and drinks contain sugars but this may not be apparent from the labelling.** Refined sugars are the main ones implicated in decay. Examples of refined sugars you may see on ingredients lists are: *sucrose, glucose, fructose, maltose, lactose* and *galactose*.

Age Specific Advice

This published advice by the department of health may differ slightly from your dentists advice depending on your risk of developing decay. If you are in any doubt what is correct for you or your child please ask.

Advice for 0-6 Years Old

- Breast feeding provides the best nutrition for babies
- From age one year feeding from a bottle should be discouraged
- Sugar should not be added to weaning foods
- Parents should brush or supervise tooth brushing
- Use only a smear of toothpaste containing no less than 1,000 ppm fluoride
- As soon as teeth erupt in the mouth brush them twice daily
- The frequency and amount of sugary food and drinks should be reduced and, when consumed, limited to mealtimes. Sugars should not be consumed more than 4 times / day
- Sugar-free medicines should be recommended

Advice for 3-6 Years Old

- Brush last thing at night and on one other occasion
- Brushing should be supervised by an adult
- Use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste containing 1,350–1,500 ppm fluoride
- Spit out after brushing and do not rinse
- The frequency and amount of sugary food and drinks should be reduced and, when consumed, limited to mealtimes. Sugars should not be consumed more than four times per day

Advice FROM 7 Years Old

- Brush last thing at night and on one other occasion
- Use fluoridated toothpaste (1,350 ppm fluoride or above) Spit out after brushing and do not rinse
- The frequency and amount of sugary food and drinks should be reduced and, when consumed, limited to mealtimes. Sugars should not be consumed more than four times per day

Those at hight risk of Decay

Use a fluoride mouth rinse daily (0.05% Fluoride) at a different time to brushing if advised to do so by your dentist or hygienist.