

Franklin House Dental Practice

information sheet for patients your child's first teeth

Your child's first teeth will begin to erupt at about 6 months of age. The lower deciduous (baby) incisors (front teeth) erupt first followed by the upper deciduous incisors. These are followed a few months later by the lower, then upper deciduous first molars (back chewing teeth), the deciduous canines (pointed teeth at side of mouth) follow and then finally the second deciduous molars top and bottom. This process takes about 18 months in total. Your child will most likely have all 20 deciduous teeth by the age of 2-2 1/2 years, although all children differ in development and this age is a rough guide, give or take 6 months.

What should you do?

Cleaning

There are no hard and fast rules. But you should start to brush your child's teeth with a soft paediatric toothbrush as soon as they become visible in the mouth. From the age of three you may start using a children's formulated toothpaste. A small pea sized amount is sufficient, using a gentle scrubbing motion to remove plaque and food debris. From the age of 6 supervised brushing in the morning and evening is advised. A small amount of adult toothpaste may be used as long as your child is able to spit it out and not swallow it.

Diet

It is not recommended that you let your child go to bed with a bottle. A bottle of milk will contain sugars that will cause tooth decay if continuously sucked upon through the night. It is best if bottles are given in one sitting and then removed. The same principle of one sitting should be applied for soft drinks, sweets and foods containing sugars as your child gets older. It is not the amount of sugar that a food contains but the frequency of consumption that is important with regards to your child's teeth.

The more frequent the sugar intake, the more often harmful acid is produced which can lead to tooth decay. Treats are best given after meals when natural sugars from food are present in the mouth anyway. Some tooth friendly snacks are fresh fruits, rice crackers, nuts and popcorn (not sugared) as alternatives to chocolate, jellies and candies. Milk or water is preferable to carbonated soft drinks. Fruit juices should be watered down and given in moderation and preferably those with no added sugar or sugar free.

Teething

This occurs when your child begins to cut their first tooth. Around this time your child's innate immunity (given by the mother during pregnancy) begins to widen and their own immune system begins to take over. Colds, fevers, irritability and runny noses etc are common at this time and are often associated with teething, but they are separate events.

If you are worried about your child's health during this period it is best to visit your GP. For teething problems it is not recommended to use pharmaceutical gels as they may contain aspirin and do not have a long duration of action. Also it is very difficult to measure the dose. A simple and effective way to relieve teething pain is to give them a piece of frozen banana, a cold piece of cucumber or carrot (large enough not to swallow), a cold teething ring or hard biscuit such as rusk.

Breastfeeding

Prolonged breastfeeding – 2 years and beyond – may cause dental decay due to the natural sugar in breast milk.

Dummies

Use them only up to the age of 2, then remove them. They are easier to remove than the child's own thumb!

What will NHS Dentist do?

If you are worried about your child's dental health then it is best that you bring them for a check up. Your child is never too young to visit the dentist, the earlier this starts the easier they are to treat as they will learn to trust the dentist and the surroundings from an early age. Bring your child with you to your check ups. Then make your child's first appointment at around 2.5 years of age. Your dentist will advise you on your child's development and dental health. You are than welcome to discuss any fears or worries you may have.

We go the extra mile, to make you smile