



# Tiny teeth!

A five-minute guide to healthy teeth for the under fives

# Toothy tips for tiny tots

A happy child with a sunny smile is what every parent wants to see.

Good teeth help your child feel confident but tooth decay can cause pain and worry, even in small children.

When it comes to children's teeth, regular brushing and visits to the dentist are important.

What, when and how your child eats and drinks is also important and this booklet gives simple facts on how you can keep your little ones grinning from ear to ear.

It's a toddle!



# First steps

**Tooth decay** (also called dental caries) is caused when the bacteria in our mouth turn sugars left behind after eating and drinking into acid. This causes damage to the teeth, leading to decay.

You can help protect small children's teeth in 3 simple steps

1. Keep sugary foods and drinks to mealtimes
2. Brush teeth and gums twice a day for at least 2 minutes with a fluoride toothpaste
3. Register with a dentist and visit regularly; the sooner the better! Children are treated free under the NHS

**Reducing sugar** in your child's diet will help prevent tooth decay, but it's **how often** rather than **how much** that is important.

The more often we eat and drink sugary things the more acid is produced and the more damage is caused to tiny teeth. Sweet drinks in a bottle, particularly at bedtime, or sweets like lollipops will damage teeth because the sugar will be in contact with the teeth for a long time.



# Erosion explosion

**Sugar** is not the only issue for dental health. Acidic foods and drinks can also be a big problem for tiny teeth by wearing away the surface of the tooth.

**Fizzy drinks, fruit juices and squashes** are often the acid culprits in the erosion explosion, even the sugar-free or diet varieties.

**To help avoid** tooth erosion, don't offer children too many acidic drinks and keep them to mealtimes rather than between meals.

**Only offer water or milk** between meals – these are good choices for tiny teeth.

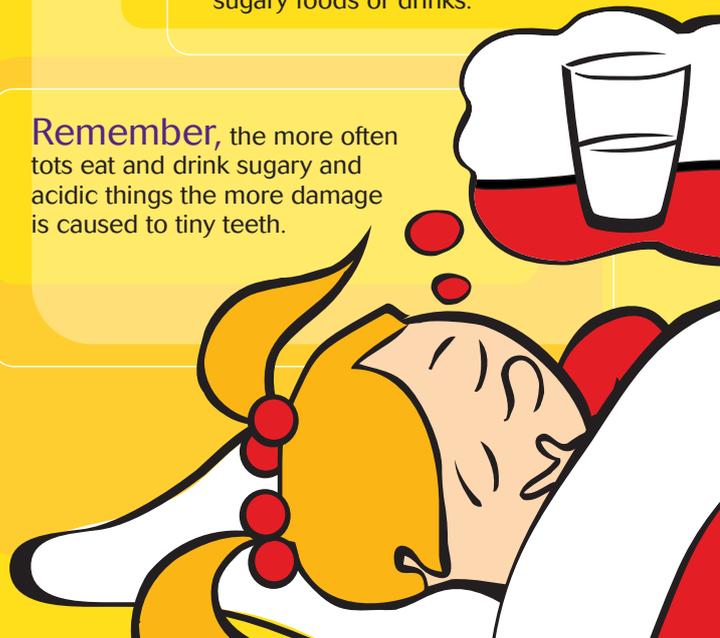
You can offer your child fruit juice at mealtimes after 6 months but make sure it's diluted. This makes it less acidic and less likely to cause tooth erosion.

**Fizzy drinks should be avoided.** Squashes and other soft drinks are not recommended for babies and toddlers but if you choose to give these to your child make sure they are

- **well-diluted**
- **drunk from a cup**
- **drunk at mealtimes**
- **never given in a bottle or at bedtime.**

**If they are thirsty at bedtime or during the night** offer water, and avoid giving your baby juices or sugary foods or drinks.

**Remember,** the more often tots eat and drink sugary and acidic things the more damage is caused to tiny teeth.



# Toothpaste power!

Take care of tiny teeth

**For a sweet smile,** brush teeth twice a day for at least 2 minutes with fluoride toothpaste\* and discourage a sweet tooth.

**Start** to brush your baby's teeth as soon as they begin to come through. Parents should continue to brush tiny teeth or supervise brushing until the age of seven or eight.



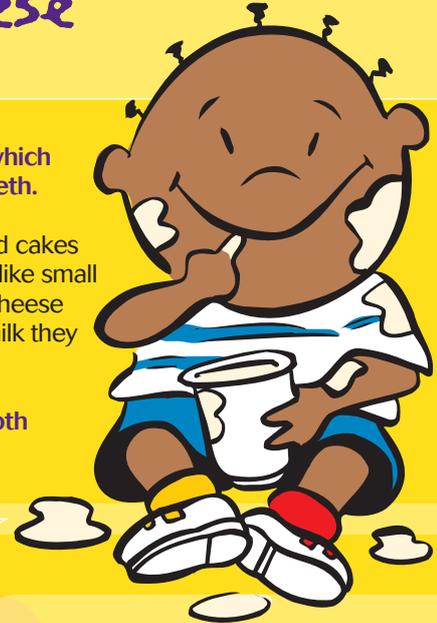
\* see page 18

# Say cheese

**Milk provides calcium which is needed for strong teeth.**

Try swapping biscuits and cakes for tooth-friendly snacks like small cubes or sticks of hard cheese and plain yogurt – like milk they also have calcium.

**Sweet snacks mean tooth decay attacks!**



Take care of tiny teeth

**Sugar** comes in many different disguises. It can be labelled in a different way so as well as sugar, look out for sucrose, fructose, glucose, maltose, dextrose, honey and concentrated fruit juice as one of the main ingredients.

# Smiles of snack ideas



Peeled and chopped fruit and vegetables

Plain yogurt with added fruit

Crumpets, toast fingers and cheese spread

Homemade plain popcorn

Chapatti, pitta bread, potato cakes, matzos and rice cakes

Plain biscuits like water biscuits and cream crackers

A stick of cheese

**Dried fruit** (this is nutritious but should be eaten with a meal and not as a snack).

Bites for growing mites

# Milky goodness

As well as providing calcium which is needed for strong teeth and bones, milk provides much more.



189ml milk (about a third of a pint) is packed with nutrients providing:

**Iodine** for children's growth

**Phosphorus** for energy release

**Protein** for bone development

**Potassium** for nerve function

**Vitamin B2** for healthy skin and vision

**Vitamin B12** for red blood cells.

**Whole cows' milk** is suitable as a main drink after 12 months, but from 6 months you can use this in cooking or mixing in cereal, and you can also give foods made from whole milk like yogurt, fromage frais and cheese.

From age 2 years onwards you can start introducing semi-skimmed milk if your child is eating a variety of foods and growing well. Otherwise stick to whole milk. 1% fat or skimmed milk is not suitable for under 5s.



## Family recipes

with milky, cheesy or yogurty ingredients

Makes 850ml (1½ pints)

### Soupa soup

**50g (2oz) smoked bacon, rinded and chopped**

**15g (½ oz) butter**

**50g (2oz) red lentils**

**1 leek, washed and finely chopped**

**2 carrots, peeled and finely chopped**

**250ml (½ pint) water**

**568ml (1 pint) milk**

**pepper to taste**

Melt the butter in a saucepan over medium heat, then add the bacon and cook for approximately two minutes. Add the other ingredients, stir, cover and simmer on a medium to low heat for 1 hour, or until the vegetables and lentils are soft, stirring a few times during cooking. Blend with a hand blender, liquidiser, food processor or sieve and spoon. Serve with a fresh bread roll.

## Easy, cheesy tuna and potato bake

**350g potatoes, washed**

**25g butter**

**25g flour**

**1 can of tuna (185g), drained**

**285ml (½ pint) milk**

**1 large leek, washed and chopped**

**1 red pepper, washed and chopped**

**90g Lancashire or other white cheese**

Preheat the oven to 200°C or gas mark 6. Parboil the potatoes leaving the skins on, and cut into wedges. Melt the butter in a pan; add the chopped leeks and pepper, and cook until just soft. Stir in the flour, cook for one minute, add the milk and heat gently until the sauce begins to thicken. Add the tuna and turn into an ovenproof dish. Arrange the potato wedges on the top and grate or crumble the cheese over. Bake for 20 minutes until the cheese is golden brown.

## Cheese & pineapple sticks

**15-20g of cheese**

**1 large slice of fresh pineapple - cut into pieces**

**Cocktail sticks**

**Add 2 pieces of pineapple to the stick and 1 piece of cheese, add another 2 pieces of pineapple. Repeat until ingredients are finished.**

## Yogurt and strawberries

**80-100g of natural unsweetened yogurt**  
**7 fresh strawberries chopped**

Place yogurt in a bowl and add chopped strawberries.



Makes 2

## Banilla whizz

**1 large ripe banana, sliced**

**1 small pot (approx 150g)  
thick and creamy vanilla yogurt**

**450ml (3/4 pint) milk**

Reserve two pieces of banana for decoration, then put the remainder into a blender or food processor with the yogurt and milk. Blend for 10-15 seconds until smooth.

Pour into two glasses and decorate with the reserved banana.

### Tasty tip

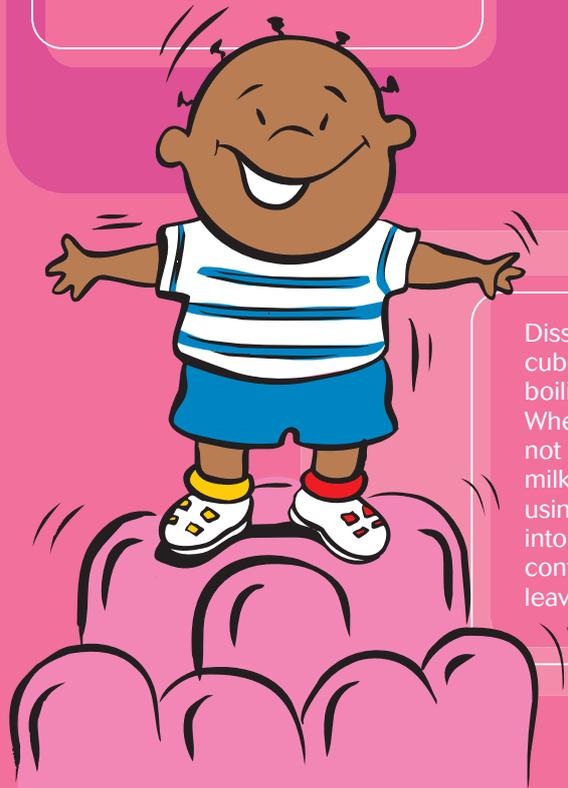
If you can't find vanilla yogurt, use natural yogurt and add 3-4 drops of vanilla essence to the blender with the other ingredients.

## Milky wobble

**1 packet of jelly**

**125ml (1/4 pint) boiling water**

**250ml (1/2 pint) milk**



Dissolve the jelly cubes in the boiling water. When cool but not set, add the milk and mix well using a fork. Pour into a mould or container and leave to set.

# Your questions answered



I've heard bottles are bad for teeth. When should I stop giving my baby a bottle?

It's fine to use a bottle until your baby is six months, however never leave your baby on its own with a bottle or when asleep as it could cause choking. It's a good idea to introduce a free-flow lidded beaker rather than a bottle from about six months onwards. Once your baby is one you should stop giving a bottle with a teat. Teats can damage teeth (especially if used to give sweetened drinks). It's best not to put anything in a bottle other than expressed breast milk, formula or water. As soon as your child is ready, encourage them to use an open cup.

## Should I stop giving my child fruit juice?

No. Pure unsweetened fruit juice plays a useful role in your child's diet and contains vitamin C. Just restrict it to mealtimes and make sure it's well diluted. Also check the label, as some ready-to-drink fruit drinks are mostly water and sugar.

## I think my child's allergic to cows' milk. Should I change to a soya drink?

Allergy to cows' milk is not as common as people think, affecting about 1 in 50 infants, but it is much less common in older children (most have outgrown their allergy by the time they start school). Always get advice from a Registered dietitian (through your GP) before excluding cows' milk.

Soya products should only be used if advised by a dietitian or GP, as children who are allergic to cows' milk may also be allergic to these. If you do give soya-based drinks it is important to choose one with added calcium, and remember that some soya-based drinks contain added sugars, which are not good for teeth.

## Are sugar-free squashes safe to give my toddler between meals?

Diet, reduced-sugar or no added sugar drinks can encourage a sweet tooth and usually contain artificial sweeteners which are not recommended for toddlers. Your toddler should avoid all soft drinks such as fizzy drinks and squashes even if sugar-free. These drinks can still contribute to tooth decay and provide little nutritional value.

## Is it OK to give my child tea or coffee?

Giving tea or coffee to young children reduces their absorption of iron and is not recommended. They also contain caffeine which is a stimulant and can disturb children's sleep.

## My child keeps asking for sweets and fizzy drinks! What can I do?

Sweets and fizzy drinks can harm your child's teeth, as well as taking away their appetite for more nutritious foods. Do not give fizzy drinks to toddlers. It's OK to give your toddler sweets occasionally, but try not to offer them regularly so that your child won't expect them and you'll avoid tantrums. If you do let your child have sweets it's best to give them all at once, at the end of a meal, as this is less harmful for their tiny teeth. Also have plenty of alternative snacks available.

## What type of toothpaste is best for young children?

For children under three years you can use a smear of family toothpaste containing at least 1,000ppm (parts per million) fluoride; for children aged three to six years a pea-sized blob is needed containing 1,350-1,500ppm fluoride. Check the toothpaste packet for this information or ask your dentist. Always supervise toothpaste use and help your child brush their teeth until at least seven years old. Also make sure they don't eat toothpaste from the tube! Your dentist can also give you advice on whether your child would benefit from extra protection such as fluoride varnishes.

## My child makes it difficult for me to brush his teeth. What can I do?

When it comes to tooth brushing, it is best to start young – as soon as your baby's teeth appear. Make it a fun part of your child's morning and bedtime routines – sing songs while you brush and use different coloured or cartoon-themed toothbrushes.

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For details on additional information sources please contact The Dairy Council



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