



LIGHTHOUSE DENTAL PRACTICE

How to care for your teeth and mouth the professional way

The information presented here should give you the tools to lower the risk of dental decay, gum disease and other conditions affecting your mouth. If you read it patiently and put this advice into practice, you have a good chance of

- Reducing the need for treatment
- reducing the time spent in the dental chair
- reducing your costs for dental treatment

The basics

The time spent for oral hygiene varies between individuals but most of us would need to spend between 4-6 minutes/day. For individual advice ask your dentist or dental hygienist.

Do not use any products mentioned in this document if you are allergic to any of the ingredients.

Key Advice

1. Diet - Avoid sugars, acids and sticky foods. Have a varied diet as recommended by trustworthy sources. NHS WEBSITE has very good advice
Key message: EAT A RAINBOW! (plenty of different vegetables and greens)

2. Oral hygiene - Spend the time needed for oral hygiene and do all required steps. In dental school we were asked: “Do you clean your teeth properly or do you just brush them?”

Research shows that adults brush their teeth on average for 45 seconds. The time needed should for a fully dentate mouth be 2 minutes! This is why we recommend electric toothbrushes; most good ones have a timer to remind you of the time needed to brush properly.

Start by cleaning between the teeth either by using floss, interdental brushes or dental toothpicks

Brush your teeth for two minutes patiently and thoroughly without too much pressure

Cleaning your tongue is also a good idea.

3. Fluoride - Use Fluoride as recommended by your dentist



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- 4. **DO NOT SMOKE!** - This increases the risk of mouth cancer. Ask your dentist to refer you to professional NHS Quit Smoking courses. They work!
- 5. **Alcohol** - Keep alcohol consumption to a minimum. Heavy drinkers also have a higher risk of developing mouth cancer
- 6. **Regular Checkups** - Visit your dentist regularly

Now, for more detailed advice, please read the information presented below!

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| <p>Why prevention?</p> | <p>There are many conditions that could affect the mouth and teeth but the two most important ones are by far Gum disease (periodontitis) in adults and Dental decay (Holes in teeth also called Caries) in both children and adults.</p> <p>Although there may be many medical factors that could influence these two diseases, there is no doubt that good preventive advice will reduce the seriousness of these diseases or prevent them happening to a great degree. Our experience is that dental staff – dental nurses, hygienists, dental therapists, dentists- have very low levels of ongoing decay or gum disease. The main reason for this is that they know how to apply prevention in practice. We would like to share this information with you, so you and your children will be properly equipped to enjoy dental health for many years to come.</p> <p>For the vast majority of us, good dental care does not need to take more than 5-6 minutes/day and should definitely be part of the daily hygiene routine.</p> |
| <p>Why do the children of today have so much better teeth than in the past?</p> | <p>The most important reason for the fact that the average population has much better teeth today than in the past, is FLUORIDE and information. In year 2000, dentists voted for the most important discovery in dentistry over the past 100 years. Fluoride won hands down followed by dental implants. Developments in dental technology make it possible for us to restore teeth in smarter ways and more cosmetically but good prevention means we may not have to do it at all. In</p> |



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| | <p>the 40's, researchers discovered that Fluoride protects teeth. It is now added in toothpaste and mouthwashes. We now understand much better how Fluoride works and can apply the knowledge to improve our lives.</p> |
| <p>If so many children have good teeth, why bother with prevention?</p> | <p>About 40% of five year olds in England have experience of dental decay.</p> <p>In East Anglia the figure is about 33%. It is usually more difficult to make a permanent filling in a young child compared to an older child or an adult. Children's teeth are just as sensitive as adult teeth, they would need a local anaesthetic (injection) for a deep filling and only a minority of children will not be affected by this.</p> |
| <p>Why bother to fill baby teeth? They will be shed anyway.</p> | <p>Because apart from the risk of infection and pain baby teeth help to maintain the dimensions of the jaws during growth.</p> <p>If we extract teeth too early we may help to create crowding and future problems with the permanent teeth.</p> |
| <p>So if the baby teeth hurt why not just take them out? It can't be that difficult, they are just baby teeth, they will fall out by themselves anyway.</p> | <p>It depends. Taking out a baby molar in a 10-12 year old may be easy but in a five year old they have huge roots, almost like adult teeth and their roots spread out quite a lot which makes them difficult to extract. It is not the legendary string tied to the door handle procedure. Add in an injection which keeps the lip and possibly the tongue numb for at least an hour and suddenly it is easy to understand why it would be much better not to have to go through such a procedure.</p> |
| <p>Ok then, what if you leave them in? Once the abscess has drained they stop hurting.</p> | <p>– Yes, it may be so but sometimes the infection could affect the development of the permanent tooth bud underneath</p> |
| <p>What causes decay and gum disease?</p> | <p>Both dental decay and gum disease are caused by germs (bacteria).</p> <p>At any given time we have around 170 different species of bacteria in our mouths. The actual number of bacteria in each mouth exceeds the number of people living on earth today. Still, no need to panic. It has always been like this. Many of</p> |



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| | <p>these are good bacteria only some of them are bad.</p> <p>The point of prevention is to keep the bad ones under control.</p> <p>This is what Harvard University Gazette has to say:</p> <p><i>"In one mouth, the number of bacteria can easily exceed the number of people who live on Earth (more than 6 billion)," notes Sigmund Socransky, associate clinical professor of periodontology (gum disease) at Harvard."</i></p> <p><i>"Of course, all of the 600-plus types of bacteria living in your mouth don't cause disease. Some of them actively produce toxins that kill the pathogens. "Good bugs that kill bad bugs," Socransky calls them. "We'd love to replace the bad guys with good guys."</i></p> |
| <p>How do children get the first germs in their mouths?</p> | <p>In the womb, children do not have any bacteria in their mouths. That is why you cannot find babies with bad breaths. New born babies start to gradually get these bacteria from the environment.</p> <p>Preventive advice:</p> <p>Never clean a baby's dropped dummy in your mouth. Wash it instead. Avoid letting young babies taste food that adults have tasted with the same spoon.</p> <p>Once you have put the spoon in your mouth do not touch the baby's food with it again without washing it.</p> <p>The longer we prevent infecting our children with our adult bacteria, the better. It appears that the immune defence of babies makes it more difficult for bacteria from their own parents to colonise the child's mouth and that bacteria from "strangers" (other children, other adults in their environment) get established faster and easier. Therefore, it is good practice to keep dummies, toothbrushes, cutlery, toys and any other objects that babies can put in their mouths as clean as practicably possible.</p> |
| <p>How do bacteria harm our</p> | <p>Dental decay</p> |



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| <p>teeth?</p> | <p>Bacteria use food available in our mouths (mainly sugars but not only sugars) As a result they produce acids. The acids remove calcium from the teeth. A hole is borne</p> <p>Bacteria+ Sugars =Acid \rightleftharpoons Cavity</p> <p>Gum disease</p> <p>Bacteria like to hide in places where they cannot be disturbed. In pits and fissures of the chewing surfaces of molars, underneath the gum line between the gums and the teeth and between the teeth. Bacteria that come in contact with the gums trigger an inflammation of the gums. When the gums become inflamed they become soft and allow more bacteria to go deeper and deeper down under the gum line. Gum disease is borne. Bleeding gums open up the body to infection. The surface area of gums which are bleeding, in a patient with full dentition (28-32 teeth) and who has advanced gum disease, is equivalent to the surface area of both your palms. Nobody would leave a weeping wound the size of their palms untreated.</p> <p>Preventive advice</p> <p><u>What can be done to prevent both these conditions?</u></p> <p>Thorough cleaning of the teeth will remove both bacteria that cause decay and bacteria who cause gum disease. We should strive to clean all tooth surfaces all the way down to gum level. Teenage children and adults should start the oral hygiene routine with flossing first, then move on to brushing.</p> <p>How can we be sure that we brush our teeth properly?</p> <p>Only by using disclosing tablets or solution. We strongly recommend the use of disclosing tablets for anybody who can use them without swallowing the dye. Children over 5-6, teenager and adults. Use them regularly until a proper brushing technique has been established. This varies a bit. Once a week in the beginning, then as the technique gets better once a</p> |
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| | month or once every 2 months. Eventually you may want to use them only a few times per year. |
| Sugars, acids and starches. | <p>Our teeth are naturally very strong and are designed for eating a varied natural diet. Tooth enamel is the hardest natural substance in both animals and humans. However, just about the only weak point it has is the fact that it gets dissolved in acids. Any acids in contact with the teeth will dissolve enamel. When we eat foods that can be processed by the bacteria in our mouths, these bacteria will produce acids. The stronger the acids and the longer they are in contact with the enamel the more damage they do. Therefore, sweet foods and foods that get stuck to the teeth for long periods of time like biscuits, crisps, toffees, and soft white bread will feed bacteria who in turn will produce acids. If these foods are consumed too often or if they get stuck to teeth for a long time, the acids will damage the teeth for that duration.</p> <p>Advice:</p> <p>Try not to eat these types of foods too often. If you consume them, do this during the same meal.</p> <p>Reduce the damage by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finishing the meal with a crunchy piece of fruit that removes sticky foods from the teeth. A piece of carrot, an apple, a stick of celery, sugar-free chewing gum for 10 minutes for children old enough not to choke on it.• Drink some milk, water or if you are at home and your child is able to rinse without swallowing, the best advice would be to rinse with a non-alcoholic fluoride mouthwash. |
| Sugars, acids and starches | <p>Every time we eat anything containing sugar, (a biscuit, ketchup, orange juice, one raisin, chocolate, etc) the bacteria will bombard our teeth with acid for up to 45 minutes. The amount we eat does not matter since even small quantities cause decay. The important thing is how often not how much sugar we consume. Two grains of sugar are enough to feed</p> |



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the bacteria in our mouth. Diluting a sugary drink will not help. **It is better to offer children a treat by letting them enjoy the occasional sweet with a meal, rather than giving them small amounts or diluted sugary drinks often in the belief that it will be a safe option.**

Therefore, children need not be deprived of everything sweet; it is just a matter of using sugar wisely. A full chocolate bar as desert will cause far less damage than many small pieces spread out during the day.

Preventive advice: Restrict the use of foods that contain sugar to maximum 4 times per day.

From a dental perspective, it is much better to eat a whole bar of chocolate and drink a glass of juice **in one go** then avoid sugars for the rest of the day, rather than eating small portions over a long period of time.

Some children may have very healthy diets but are given a glass of fresh juice to have a sip from every now and again. Every time they have a sip the teeth will be under acid attack for up to 45 minutes. A glass of juice drunk in this fashion will cause more damage than a one litre bottle drunk in one go. Freshly squeezed orange juice contains more sugar than fresh oranges. This is because when juice is made, the sugar is crushed out of the orange cells in the process whilst when we eat an orange, we cannot crush every cell between our teeth and therefore we cannot release the same amount of sugar. Some sources say that drinking through a straw will not cause cavities or acid erosion on the teeth (acid erosion means thinning out of the enamel). This is **generally not true** since the straw method means that the straw will have to be placed **quite far back in the mouth**. Not much fun enjoying a glass of juice if the straw is placed too far back in the mouth. It is better to drink it normally in connection with a meal. Puddings and sweets should be restricted to special occasions. They may be replaced by fruit. If they are given, they should be given as part of a main meal rather than a snack between the meals.



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| | <p>After drinking or anything acidic like fruit juices, soft drinks, vinegar on chips, do not brush your teeth straight away. This will help remove calcium from them faster. Use a fluoride mouthwash and wait 30 min before brushing. Avoid fruit juices during weekdays in the mornings. Let them drink milk or water instead. This way your child can brush his/her teeth straight after breakfast and you do not have to think about rinsing with any fluoride.</p> <p>Another way to stop an acid attack in the mouth is to dissolve two teaspoons of baking soda in a glass of water and rinse with a mouthful of the liquid.</p> |
| <p>Fluoride</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fluoride repairs early damage to the enamel. It will not do anything for your gums. If used properly it is beneficial and safe. It can however be toxic and dangerous if it is swallowed in large quantities.• Fluoride mouthwashes are best used after meals to stop an acid attack or after eating or drinking anything acidic or sour. Sour or acidic foods and drinks (vinegar on chips, fruit juices, fizzy drinks, sour sweets, excess of citrus fruits) thin out the enamel. The best way to protect your teeth after eating or drinking anything acidic is to rinse your mouth with a fluoride mouthwash. Do not brush them for the next half hour or you will help remove the enamel faster.• Fluoride is only efficient if it is present in saliva. Therefore, adults who have lots of cavities get the best help if they rinse with a fluoride mouthwash 5-6 times/day.• CHILDREN SHOULD ONLY USE FLUORIDE PRODUCTS IF THEY ARE SUPERVISED BY AN ADULT AND IF THEY ARE MATURE ENOUGH NOT TO SWALLOW THE TOOTHPASTE OR THE MOUTHWASH. CHILDREN SHOULD NOT USE ANY FLUORIDE MOUTHWASHES MORE THAN TWICE A DAY WITHOUT CONSULTING A DENTAL PROFESSIONAL.• When rinsing your mouth, DO NOT GARGLE. If you gargle, you risk swallowing the liquid. For effective rinsing with |



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| | <p>fluoride toothpaste containing 1500ppm fluoride (adult toothpaste) or 6 teaspoons of 1000ppm toothpaste (children's toothpaste) or 133ml (almost half a 300ml bottle or 27 teaspoons) of fluoride mouthwash containing 225 ppm fluoride. The recommended amount of toothpaste is just a smear for children under 3 and a pea size for children over 3. A pea is 7-8mm in diameter and has a volume of 0.18 to 0.27ml. A teaspoon has a volume of 5ml. This means than for a small child weighing 22lb the amount of toothpaste to be ingested in order for symptoms to appear needs to be approximately 20-25 times the recommended amount. (at 1500ppm fluoride) A 3 year old child weighs on average 30lb.</p> |
| <p>What do we mean by a good oral hygiene?</p> | <p>Good oral hygiene is the process of cleaning the teeth from harmful deposits (plaque and remaining food particles) from the mouth whilst avoiding damaging the teeth or gums in the process. Helping the teeth to recover from early damage by using fluoride in the right way is an added bonus. Harmful deposits are the germs responsible for causing holes in the teeth (cavities) and gum disease. Food rests that get stuck to the teeth are also part of the harmful deposits because they feed the germs and allow them to cause the damage. When germs grow and multiply on the teeth and under the gum line they form clusters or large colonies. These are soft, can be brushed away and are called dental plaque. Plaque is usually invisible to the naked eye. To see it properly it needs to be disclosed. This means that you or your dentist can apply a colouring agent on the teeth and this dye colours the plaque red for recent plaque and blue for plaque that is older than one day.</p> <p>Without using disclosing tablets or dye, you cannot tell for sure if your teeth are clean. This is why we always recommend our patients to use disclosing tablets as part of their oral hygiene at regular intervals, once every 1-2 months. This will enable parents to monitor how well they clean the children's teeth and will allow everybody to</p> |



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| | <p>individualise their brushing technique.</p> <p>If the soft plaque is left on the teeth it becomes hard like lime scale. This is called tartar or dental calculus and you cannot brush it away. It also contains minerals like phosphate and calcium. Tartar can only be removed efficiently from the teeth by dental professionals. If it is left on the teeth for long periods it can cause gum disease and destroy the bone support for the teeth.</p> |
| How to choose the right toothpaste | <p>There are many brands of toothpaste on the market. For children without any allergies to ingredients in the toothpaste or medical conditions affecting their teeth or diet, the choice of toothpaste is quite simple. You need to choose a toothpaste with the right amount of fluoride and with a pleasant taste. The amount of fluoride is given as ppm which means parts per million. When choosing your toothpaste, look on the back of the tube or pack for the Fluoride concentration expressed in ppm. Typically this should be between 1000-1500ppm.</p> |
| How to choose the right toothbrush? | <p>If used properly, rechargeable electric toothbrushes are better than manual toothbrushes for most people. Use a manual toothbrush in small children under 4. Always supervise children when they are brushing their teeth.</p> <p>Manual toothbrushes</p> <p>Choose a small toothbrush with soft bristles and rounded bristle tips so as not to injure the gums.</p> <p>Electric toothbrushes</p> <p>Go for the established brands. Choose rechargeable brushes not battery operated ones. The best ones have small soft round or oval brush heads which rotate back and forth. Expect to pay from £25 upwards for a reliable electric brush. The brush heads are cheaper.</p> |



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| | <p>Ultrasonic brushes are good too but are more expensive.</p> <p>For top quality you may have to pay from £50 upwards but bear in mind that if used properly, electric brushes can save you hundreds if not thousands of pounds in avoided costs for dental treatments.</p> <p>Good brands (without wishing to financially endorse any of them) are Braun Oral B and Philips Sonicare.</p> |
| What mouthwash? | <p>Children under 7 should not use a mouthwash unless you are sure that they can rinse without swallowing it.</p> <p>Children over 7 will only need a fluoride mouthwash if they have cavities. Most children will not need any mouthwashes if they have a good diet and brush their teeth correctly but if they like using one it's ok as long as they do not swallow it.</p> <p>Children with several fillings or cavities before the age of 5 should seek professional advice on use of fluoride from their dentist.</p> <p>Avoid mouthwashes which contain alcohol. This is valid for both adults and children. Some manufacturers label alcohol as ethanol (one of the many types of alcohol). Look at the ingredients on the back of the bottle. If it says ethanol, avoid it. If it is labelled alcohol free, it is fine.</p> |
| Do antibacterial mouthwashes cure gum disease? | <p>Many mouthwashes promise more than they can deliver. Nothing replaces a thorough oral hygiene technique. Many of us may need individualised advice from their dentists or hygienists in this respect. Gum disease is often seated under the gum line where a mouthwash would not reach. Antibacterial mouthwashes or gels like chlorhexidine (Corsodyl) are very effective in keeping the bacterial numbers low and are therefore very good for short periods after oral surgery when you cannot brush or after gum treatment done by the dentist or hygienist. Using a mouthwash to cure gum disease without seeking professional help, will not work.</p> |
| Are whitening toothpastes | <p>Not very much.</p> |



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| effective? | Usually, the industry defines whitening as the process of removing stains from the teeth and some whitening toothpastes may be more abrasive. What the public is looking for is actually bleaching, which no toothpastes can do effectively. Bleaching means rendering a tooth whiter than its original shade, usually by using a chemical. |
| Miscellaneous | <p>Teething - Teething may cause gums to be a bit sore or itchy. Because of this, babies will put more things in their mouths including bacteria and viruses. If they develop a temperature it will be because of an infection, not the teething as such.</p> <p>Pregnancy does not remove calcium from the teeth, not at all. The only thing that can remove calcium from a formed tooth is the acid produced by bacteria when we eat sugars or starches or the acid from food itself. Being at home during pregnancy can change one's diet due to the ready availability of food. Frequent snacking will cause decay but this decay will be the result of a wrong diet rather than pregnancy itself.</p> <p>Pregnant women may however have a slightly more acidic saliva which might make it easier for them to develop cavities if they use sugary drinks or foods too often.</p> <p>Ulcers - If you get ulcers very often, one of contributing factors may be a compound very commonly found in toothpaste, called Sodium Lauryl Sulphate. It makes the lather. This is thought to break down the natural defence of the oral mucosa (skin in the mouth) and make it easier for cold sores to happen. Use a toothpaste without this compound. Aloe Dent Toothpaste from health shops has been tried by some of our patients with very good reports. Another toothpaste for this purpose is Zendium. It used to be available in the UK but now it can only be bought on line. It is very popular in Holland, Germany and Scandinavia.</p> |



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| | <p>Tooth grinding during sleep - Quite common in both children and adults. In adults it may cause headaches and is more damaging to the teeth than chewing. During a normal day our teeth come in to contact for a total of 15-17 minutes. During the night the forces may be much higher and the duration much longer.</p> |
| <p>Sensitive teeth</p> | <p>Sensitivity is caused by movement of liquid inside the tooth.</p> <p>What can cause sensitivity?</p> <p>Loss of protective surface on the teeth due to one or more of the following causes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acids washing away the surface (drinks, excessive citrus fruit consumption, wine, vinegar on chips, etc)• Too hard brushing (incorrect technique) or using a brush with hard bristles.• Tooth grinding (Very common, happens during the night, patient may often be unaware) <p>This advice is very effective but you need to follow the right procedures. What can you do at home? This advice is for adults only Children do not get sensitive teeth too often but it does happen.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. First clean between the teeth using good flossing technique or interdental brushes or interdental sticks2. Then brush your teeth thoroughly but gently3. Then apply a thin layer of Sensodyne Rapid relief or Colgate Pro relief Toothpaste <p>Alternative to step 3 – frequent fluoride mouthwashes Endekay, Duraphat, Sensodyne Pro Namel Acid Protection</p> <p>There are some very efficient toothpastes Clean interdentally, brush to 100% clean then apply rapid relief or fluoride expect gradual improvement then avoid acids. May take a few weeks to get results</p> <p>May also need help from dentist with a night guard or to fill out erosions</p> |



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| <p>Which individuals may be prone to dental decay</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• People with frequent intakes of sugary foods, drinks or medication.• People who suffer from a dry mouth, usually from medication or other medical treatment. Some children may, due to nasal polyps or other causes, breathe only through the mouth. This will make them mouth-dry and they may be more prone to developing dental decay• Children with braces due to difficulties in cleaning the teeth properly.• People with acidic saliva – Pregnancy, women past the menopause, puberty – and who also have frequent sugary treats• People who’s teeth have exposed root surfaces (When the gums pulls down from the crown of the teeth) <p>Advice:</p> <p>Think of the diet - avoid frequent sugary treats, clean the teeth correctly, use fluoride correctly.</p> |
| <p>Other tips</p> | <p>Sugar-free chewing gum for 10 minutes after a meal will help clean the teeth. Avoid sour (acidic) chewing gum (orange or strawberry) The minty one seems to be better.</p> <p>Sour sweets are extremely erosive and sweet. They are very bad for the teeth.</p> <p>Sticky toffees – bad too</p> <p>Chocolate – not good but better than the above</p> <p>Good treats (apart from fresh veggies and fruit)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plain popcorn (risk of choking in young children) |



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peanuts – plain roasted, not honey coated or sweet. (if not allergic)• Roasted nut mixes (check the salt content) <p>Choose sugar-free products. Some squashes or juices are labelled “No added sugar” This means that the manufacturer has not added any more sugar than there was originally in the product. They are not safe alternatives since they may very well still contain sugar, it’s just that the manufacturer may have used a sugary base and they did not add more sugar to it.</p> <p>“Low sugar” products still cause decay.</p> |
| Flossing or cleaning between the teeth- Is it important? | <p>When I was in dental school one of the teachers asked us: “Do you clean your teeth properly or do you just brush them?”</p> <p>For adults or older children we recommend flossing the teeth before brushing. This is because 35% of tooth surfaces are between the teeth and no toothbrush will reach these spaces.</p> |