



Feeding the under 3s  
the food they need

# Protecting toddlers from tooth decay

Guidance & Tips for Parents

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## THINGS THAT HELP

You can protect your toddler's teeth and prevent tooth decay by regular brushing with a fluoride toothpaste, and sensible eating and drinking habits.

### Regular effective tooth brushing to remove plaque

Start brushing your toddler's teeth as soon as they erupt and register him or her with a dentist.

An easy way to brush your child's teeth is from behind. Comfortable and safe positions for your toddler can be on your knee, sitting on a changing mat, in a high chair or in a pram or buggy.

As more teeth come through, develop a system of cleaning them that ensures all surfaces are brushed thoroughly twice each day.

Toddlers should be encouraged to enjoy brushing their own teeth, but children should be supervised until at least seven years and always taught to 'spit don't rinse', because excessive rinsing removes the benefit of fluoride.

### Fluoride toothpaste to strengthen tooth enamel

Brush your toddler's teeth twice a day with a small, soft, dry brush, using a toothpaste containing fluoride:

- **up to the age of three** use a smear of toothpaste containing 1000ppm of fluoride
- **over the age of three** use a pea sized amount of toothpaste containing 1350–1500ppm of fluoride





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## Take care with sweet food and drinks

Always dilute fruit juices because they are both sweet and acidic and can damage teeth. Serve them in a cup, never in a bottle.

Never leave a bottle of milk or a sweet drink with your toddler when you put him or her down to sleep.

Begin using a cup or free-flow beaker for drinks from about six months or so, and stop using bottles around 12 months. Never give sweet drinks in a bottle because sucking slowly on sweet drinks increases the risk of tooth decay.

Water or milk are safe drinks between meals and snacks. Give only water at night to toddlers.

Limit foods and drinks containing sugar to four times a day, e.g. at the three meals and one snack. The other snacks should be savoury snacks with no sweet food or drinks.

Do not allow grazing on food and drinks throughout the day. Only offer your toddler food at three meals and two to three snacks each day.

If your child uses a pacifier, soother or dummy, make sure it is an orthodontic dummy and never dip it in anything sweet.



## Nutritious snacks

<b>Fruit</b>	mouth-sized chunks, cubes or slices of apple, pear, satsuma, orange, banana, kiwi, melon, strawberries, sliced grapes, peaches and plums
<b>Raw vegetable sticks or slices</b>	carrot, pepper, celery, cucumber, sliced cherry tomato, radish, broccoli
<b>Toast, bread, rolls, baps, bread sticks, plain buns</b>	French bread with a small amount of butter or spread; mini savoury sandwiches with marmite, cheese, tuna, banana, salad or thin slices of meat; pita bread pockets cut into small slices or toasted with or without butter or spread e.g. olive or sunflower oil spread; breadsticks on their own or with a dip or soft cheese
<b>Oatcakes, rice cakes, crackers, crispbreads, melba toast</b>	plain or with butter or spread e.g. olive oil or sunflower oil spread, or use a savoury spread, such as marmite or peanut butter
<b>Natural yogurt or fromage frais</b>	on its own or as a dip or with fruit
<b>Muffins, plain, potato or cheese scones, crumpets, pancakes, plain popcorn</b>	on their own or with a small amount of butter or spread
<b>Wholegrain breakfast cereals, but not cereal bars</b>	serve with milk and fresh fruit

## Where possible use a sugar-free medicine

If your child is prescribed a medicine, ensure that it is a sugar-free (SF) medicine if possible. If there is no sugar-free option give the medicine at meal times.

