

Healthy Teeth, Healthy Smile

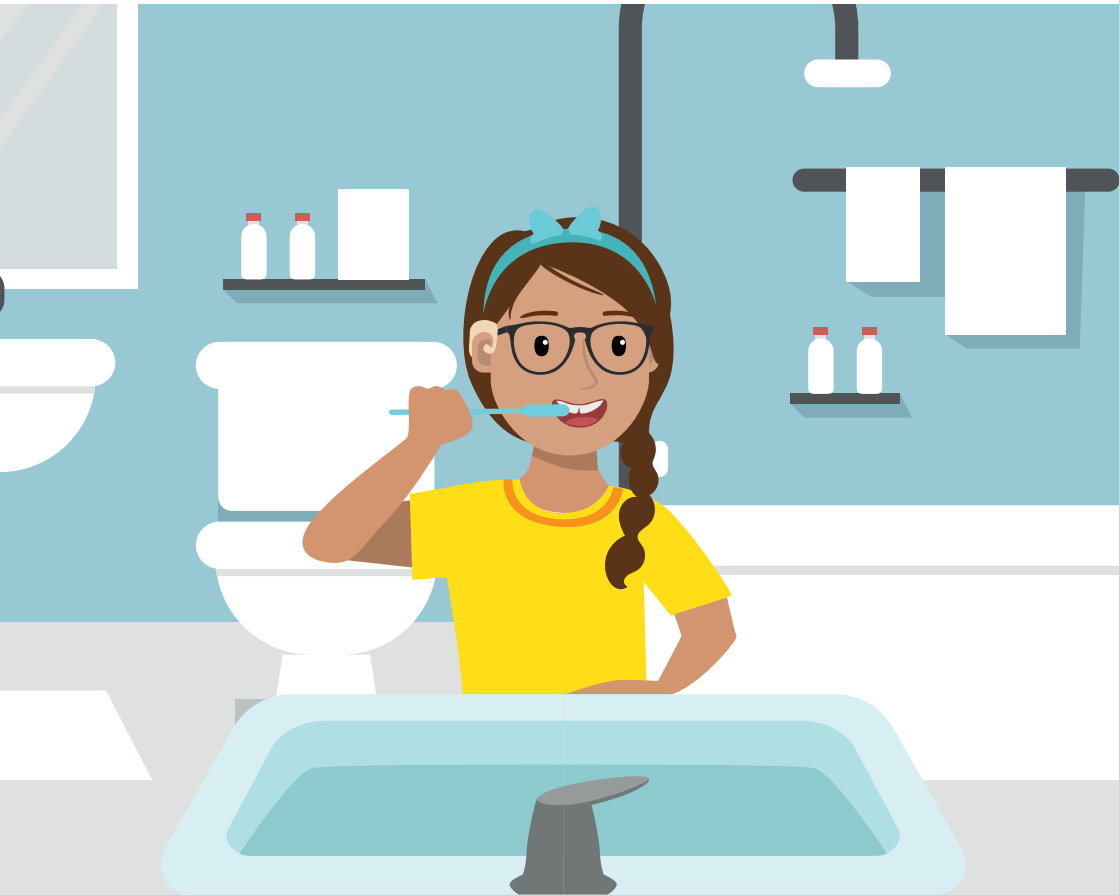
A guide for parents and carers of children and young people with a disability or additional needs.



Good oral health

Good oral health is important for everyone, especially for children and young people with a disability or additional needs. A healthy mouth is essential for general health, the enjoyment of food, confidence and a healthy smile.

Having a disability can sometimes put children and young people at a greater risk of tooth decay and gum disease as well as difficulties accepting dental treatment.



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Sugar and tooth decay

Sugar is the main cause of tooth decay particularly when sugary food and drink are consumed in-between meals. Sugars that increase the risk of tooth decay are 'free sugars'. These are sugars added to food, and sugars naturally present in honey, syrups, fruits juices and dried fruit. The good news is, it does not include sugars found in whole fresh fruit and vegetables and those naturally present in milk and milk products.



The main message is to reduce the amount and frequency of foods and drinks that contain free sugars. Try keep sugary food and drink to mealtimes only. In between meals offer healthier snacks that do not contain 'free-sugars'.

Ideas for healthier snacks

- **Any fruit, fresh, frozen or tinned in natural juices**
- Vegetables or salad, either soft cooked or raw
- **Breads (soft fingers of toast, crumpets, chapatti, pitta)**
- Dairy foods (natural yoghurt, cheese, cottage cheese)
- **Cream crackers, crisp breads, rice cakes and breadsticks (plain not flavoured)**



Think Drinks

Water and milk are the best drinks for in between meals.
Try to keep all other drinks to mealtimes only.

- **Pure fruit juices contain vitamins but also a large amount of natural sugar. Drink no more than one 150ml portion a day, at a mealtime**
- 'Diet' drinks contain no or little added sugar however they are acidic and can be harmful to teeth if consumed too often

Sugars

Sugars can also be detrimental to general health, increasing the risk of obesity, diabetes and heart problems. We know that on average children and adults are exceeding the maximum daily amount of sugar. To check your daily sugar consumption you can download the Change 4 Life sugar scanner Food facts - Change4Life. www.nhs.uk/change4life

**let's get
sugar smart**

**Find the sugar
with our Sugar Smart app**

Available on the
App Store

GET IT ON
Google Play

Search Change4Life

sugar smart
change 4 life

Results
9 sugar cubes

cola

Foods and drinks high in sugar :

Sugared soft drinks, sweets and chocolate, **cakes and biscuits**, buns, **pastries**, fruit pies, **sponge puddings and other puddings**, table sugar, **breakfast cereals**, jams, **preserves**, honey, **ice cream and sorbets**, fruit in syrup, **fresh fruit juices**, sugared milk-based beverages, **sugar-containing alcoholic drinks**, dried fruits, **syrops and sweet sauces and flavoured yoghurts**.

High calorie diets and frequent food intakes

Some children and young people with disabilities or additional needs require high calorie diets and frequent food intakes. This increases the risk of tooth decay. The advice given in this leaflet on tooth brushing and fluoride will help protect teeth. You should also seek advice from your dentist.



Feeding and drinking

Breastfeeding provides the best nutrition. Support to breastfeed is available from your midwife, health visitor, or the Calderdale Breastfeeding Peer Support Service on **07920 466 660**

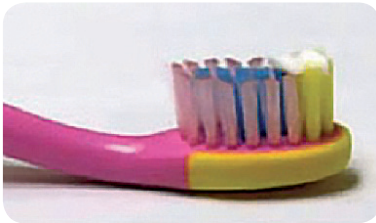
If bottle fed:

- **Only give milk or cooled boiled water - unless advised differently by your doctor**
- Don't add things like sugar, honey, egg custard or rice to milk
- **Never leave the bottle with a child at bedtime or when pushed around in a pushchair**
- From six months of age introduce a free-flow cup, and from age one year discourage feeding from a bottle, depending on the disability
- **Non-spill cups such as valve cups, anyway up cups and sip and seal cups are not recommended**
- Children over 12 months should only drink water during the night

Twice daily toothbrushing

Twice daily toothbrushing with fluoride toothpaste strengthens teeth and is essential to keep gums healthy.

- **Start brushing as soon as the first tooth appears using a baby toothbrush**
- Brush twice every day, especially before bed and one other time
- **Squeeze toothpaste onto a dry brush – use a smear for under 3s and pea-size amount for over 3s**



- Encourage to spit not rinse after brushing to allow fluoride longer to work
- **Make sure toothpaste is not eaten or licked from the tube**

Gum Health

- For very young children, toothbrushing technique is not important. However, as children get older it is important to brush where the teeth and gums meet



Gently hold the lips and cheeks away from the teeth. Place the head of the toothbrush against the teeth and using a small gentle side to side scrub brush all surfaces of the teeth, including where the gums and teeth meet. This method ensures fingers are not between teeth where they can be bitten.



Fluoride levels

The level of fluoride in toothpaste is important for it to be effective.

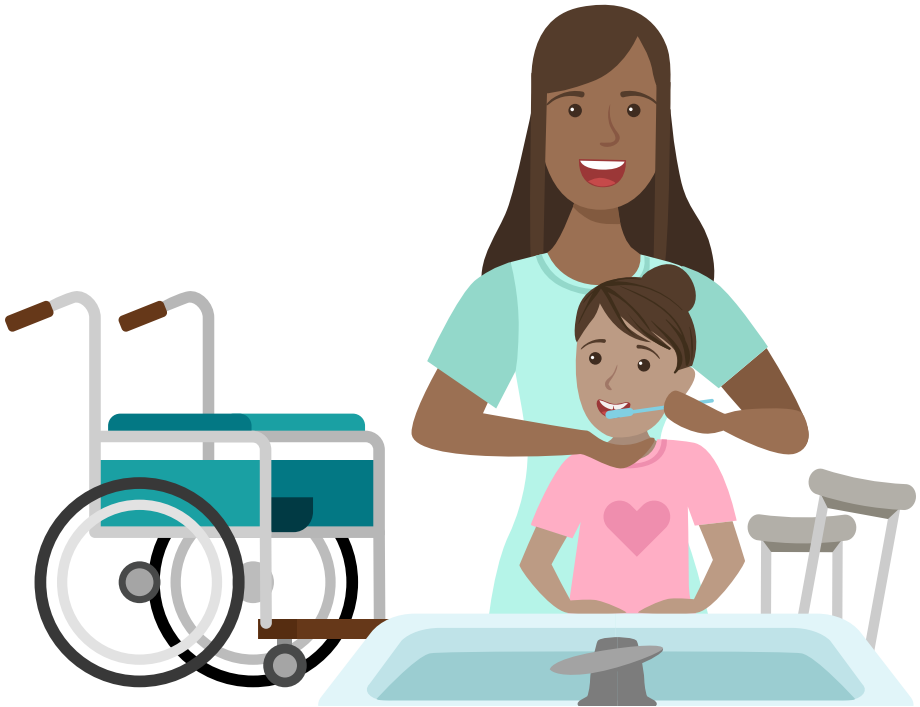
Use a fluoridated toothpaste containing 1,350-1,500 ppm fluoride. Some children's toothpaste may have low levels of fluoride, check the information on the packaging or the toothpaste tube.

Fluoride varnish

Those at high risk of tooth decay may benefit from fluoride varnish applied professionally. **Ask your dentist.**

Helping with brushing

Toothbrushing should be supervised up to the age of 8 years, but for children and young people with disabilities or additional needs, this may be necessary even into adult life, depending on the levels of dexterity and independence. However, all children and young people should be encouraged to brush their own teeth, even if support and help are required.



Before you start think about how it may feel for them

Brushing someone else's teeth can feel invasive. You know your child or young person best and what might work for them.

Try;

- **Cradle a baby or small child in your arms**
- For an older child stand behind them supporting the head. The child can be stood, seated or sat on your knee
- **For some, being laid down is the most helpful position**

Use;

- **A small headed brush - this will feel more comfortable particularly near the back of the mouth**
- A dry brush, this reduces frothing and the feeling of choking
- **For some a power brush - children may enjoy the feeling and they can provide novelty value. They can be used from age three upwards**

Adapting Toothbrushes:

Adapting a toothbrush or purchasing a specialised toothbrush that allows the brush to be easily held and manoeuvred can help increase independence.

A specialised brush, as discussed below, can make brushing quicker and easier for the child or young person and for the parent / carer.



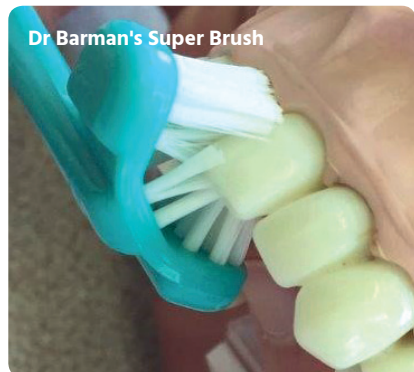
Dr. Barman's Super brushes are available from Locala Dental Care Clinics or see stockists page 22. See image page 14.

When brushing is difficult

The most common problems are biting the brush, sticking out the tongue, gagging or retching and resisting or refusing to brush. Here are tips others have tried and tested.

- **Biting down on the brush - let them continue to bite down on the brush while you brush on the opposite side**
- Tight lips - try massage the lips and cheeks before brushing or place your hand against the cheek near the area you are brushing to provide comfort
- **Strong tongue - try manoeuvre around a strong tongue. A specialist brush like Dr Barmans superbrush may help, see image on page 14. Stockists on page 22**
- Gagging and retching start brushing from the front and clean as much at the back of the mouth as the child will allow. Frequent breaks will help
- **Brush in front of mirror so they can see what's happening**
- Use distractions like music or video's, for example, 'Brush Dj' a free App. Download from the App Store and Google Play.
- **Use motivators such as a toothbrushing timetable (there is one free to download from the Calderdale Healthy Early Years website www.healthyearlyyears.co.uk , scroll down through Library and videos)**

- Brush in a favourite place such as the bath, on the bed, or with a favourite toy
- **Brush with parents, family members/carers. Use a toothbrush in play on dolls, teddies etc.**
- Morning and last thing before bed are the best times to brush, but your child may be more cooperative at other times in the day
- **Try different flavours of toothpaste, such as mild mint, fruit flavoured or no flavour at all. OraNurse is a flavourless toothpaste which contains the recommended level of fluoride. Stockists can be found on page 22**
- Try a non-foaming toothpaste, one that doesn't contain sodium laurel sulphate (SLS). Examples available on the high-street are Pronamel from 6+ years, Aquafresh milk teeth, Big Teeth and Oranurse (unflavoured) see page 22 for stockists
- **Let the child hold the brush whilst you guide them, or encourage them to place their hand over yours whilst you brush. They may also like to brush one side while you brush the other**
- Sometimes it takes two people, one to brush whilst the other provides distraction, comfort and support



Oral Sensitivity

When a child is sensitive to touch it is not uncommon for the area within and around the mouth to cause the most problems. This can result in frustration for parents when brushing teeth. Oral normalisation (desensitisation) may help children become more tolerant of sensations in their mouths and increase their ability and willingness to brush teeth.

This can be done through facial massage if the child enjoys this. Using your fingers make gentle stroking movements down their face and cheeks, around their mouth and lastly, lips.

If your child finds it difficult to accept touch then firm stroking movements on their face, as above, may be more easily accepted.

Try using toothbrushes for massage on hands, working gradually up arms to face and eventually the mouth.

Finger brushes can be helpful for desensitising a child to brushing. Gently massage around the teeth and gums, the tongue as well if that's possible. As a child becomes more accepting of the finger brush you can introduce a small headed soft toothbrush.

Aim to do this on a daily basis as this will help to maximise their ability to tolerate sensations in their mouths.

Where there is a very strong oral aversion and the child won't tolerate any kind of brushing at all, chew toys are an excellent way of providing oral stimulation and exercising the mouth muscles, working towards the acceptance of a toothbrush. If tolerated the chew toy can be used to introduce toothpaste by applying a very small smear at first.

The child's Speech and Language Therapist can offer additional advice.

**For stockists of the OraNurse finger toothbrush see page 22.
There are many other finger brushes available.**

Children who are tube fed

Daily mouth cleaning is very important for these children because plaque bacteria can cause chest infections. Children who are tube fed are more likely to build up tartar (calculus) and it can be difficult to remove. Twice daily brushing by the parent or carer will help to avoid these problems and keep the breath fresh and gums healthy.

Follow the toothbrushing guidance in the previous section, and find specific guidance below.

- **To prevent aspiration, (the breathing in of moisture when brushing) tilt the head forward. Don't wet the brush before brushing**
- Suction is not normally needed if careful positioning is used. However, if you have oral suction at home you may wish to use it. Suction toothbrushes e.g. Toothette Oral Care Suction Toothbrush are available from various stockists - see Page 22
- **A non-foaming toothpaste is helpful, one that doesn't contain sodium laurel sulphate (SLS). Readily available brands include: OraNurse (unflavoured), Pronamel 6+ years, Aqua fresh Milk Teeth and Big Teeth**
- Try to gently brush the tongue to prevent it becoming coated

Dry mouth

Dry mouth can be a side effect of some medicines and medical conditions. Children and young people with dry mouth are more prone to tooth decay, mouth and gum infections. A dry mouth can be sore and very uncomfortable. Understandably they may not want teeth brushed and very dry mouths can be difficult to open. There are oral moisturisers, such as BioXtra Gel and spray (see page 22 for stockists) that can provide comfort and moisture. Ask your dentist for advice.

Grinding teeth

This can lead to the wearing down of teeth. It is quite common in children and young people with learning disabilities and may be a coping mechanism. Little is known about how it can be treated. If concerned ask your dentist for advice.

Regular check-ups at the dentist

Are recommended for all children by the age of one-year. They can be seen at a general dental practice (family dentist) or at a special needs dental service (specifically for people with a disability). In Calderdale and Kirklees, the special needs dental service is provided by Locala Dental Care. For more information go to page 21.

Preparing for a dental visit

New experiences can be difficult so we've included here some ideas on making a dental visit a more positive experience.

Prepare yourself

Contact the dental team before the first visit about the needs of your child. You could consider a visit to the surgery before the appointment to experience the feel and smell of the surgery and to meet the staff.

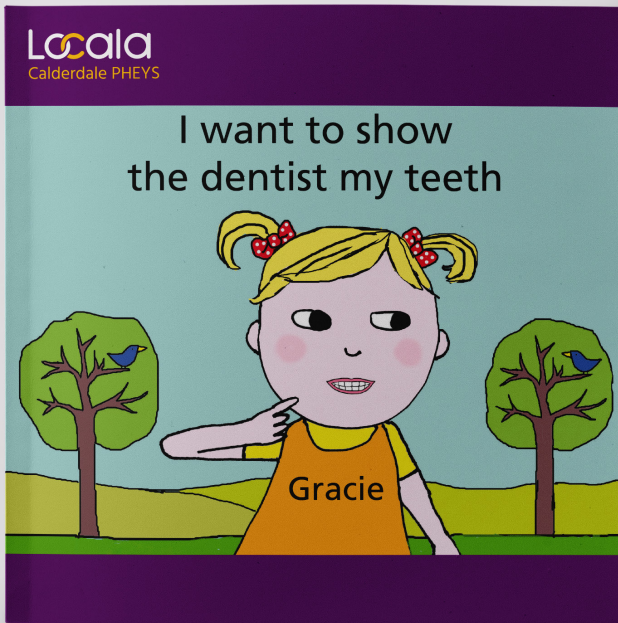
Prepare the patient

Be positive when you talk about what is going to happen. It helps if the child or young person comes with someone that they know and who has been part of the preparation. Try practise opening the mouth ready for the dentist to look inside. Use dental pictures or photos, books and toys to familiarise the patient before their visit.



A FREE book on dental visits is available to download at

www.healthyearlyyears.co.uk/docs/library/child-dentist.pdf



Prepare the dental team

Remember to bring an up to date list of medical conditions and medication. Tell the dental team if your child or young person;

- **Is frightened of strange environments which may show in their behaviour**
- Cannot wait and needs to be seen promptly
- **Doesn't like to be touched, but may touch others**
- Find smells, textures or tastes upsetting
- **Doesn't like bright lighting**



Do include other information that you feel would help like previous experiences of dental appointments. You may want to bring a toothbrush and toothpaste from home for some practical help and advice on mouth care.

Further information can be found at the websites listed below. If you're unsure about any aspect of oral care please ask your dentist or health professional.

www.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk/change4life

www.healthyearlyyears.co.uk

All products mentioned in this leaflet are available from the stockists below. The products/stockists are specialised but other brands and stockists are available.

BioXtra gel and spray - refer to page 18

OraNurse toothpaste - refer to page 14 & 15

OraNurse Finger Toothbrush

SuperBrush - refer to a page 12 & 14

Toothette Suction Toothbrush - refer to page 17

CARESHOP - 0845 266 8744

www.careshop.co.uk

DENTOCARE - 020 8459 7550

www.dentocare.co.uk

DHB – 0208 391 8891

www.dentalmania.co.uk

DENTAL SKY - 0800 294 4700

www.dentalsky.com

Locala Dental Care

Designed for children and adults with additional needs who can't be seen within the general dental service.

Dental Care Clinics:

North Kirklees - 030 3330 9750

Cleckheaton Health Centre

Greenside
Cleckheaton
BD19 5AP

Batley Health Centre

Upper Commercial Street
Batley
WF17 5ED

Huddersfield - 030 3330 9750

Holme Valley Memorial Hospital

Huddersfield Road
Holmfirth
HD9 3TS

Princess Royal Community Health Centre

Greenhead Road
Huddersfield
HD1 4EW

Calderdale - 030 3330 9750

St Johns Health Centre

Lightowler Road
Halifax
HX1 5NB

Todmorden Health Centre

Off Halifax Road
Lower George Street
Todmorden
OL14 5QG

For more information visit

www.locala.org.uk/your-healthcare/dental-services/

Produced in partnership between Public Health Early Years, Oral Health Team and Locala Dental Care. Adapted with kind permission of the Public Health Agency. Special thanks for the help and advice to the Children Speech and Language Therapy service Locala and thanks to Unique Ways and parents for their contributions. The products/stockists mentioned in this leaflet are specialised products but other brands and stockists are available. Please contact our Dental Care Clinics or see Page 19 for more information.

This leaflet was produced on 07/03/2019