

Taking care of teeth

Children need to understand why their teeth are important and how to take good care of them.

The FDI World Dental Federation carried out a global survey which found that only 13% of infants had been to the dentist before their first birthday as recommended. It also found that only 43% of parents said that they personally brushed their children's teeth before bedtime.

The 2013 Children's Dental Health Survey for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (this survey is carried out every 10 years) found that nearly half of eight-year-olds and a third of five-year-olds have signs of decay in their milk teeth.

Resources

- Plastic ice cube trays
- Dry-wipe marker pens
- Crafting sticks (like lollypop sticks) with a small amount of felt or pieces of duster glued to the end.



Activity Outline

- You could start by asking the children to say “cheese” or “smile” (perhaps you could take photos of each other smiling)
- Ask the children why their teeth are important and/or why it is important to look after your teeth
 - Strong, healthy teeth help you chew food and eating the right food helps you to grow
 - Teeth help you speak clearly
- Explain that after you eat sugar and food, bits are left on your teeth. Bacteria break down the food and sugar left on your teeth; this can cause holes in the tooth enamel (depending on the age and stage of the child you may have to differentiate this information) so it is important to clean your teeth at least twice a day and at least half an hour after mealtimes if you can
- You can demonstrate the above points by drawing marks on the upturned ice cube trays (these may look like teeth if you are using a white plastic tray). Then show the children (using the felt end of the crafting stick) that brushing removes the food/sugar making it harder for the bacteria to come and make holes in their teeth
- You can leave this activity out for the children – can they make the marker pen marks (sugar/food) go away with the felt on their crafting sticks?

Extending the activity

- Perhaps you could have a dentist guest visit to speak to you? They could show the children how to brush their teeth properly or perhaps they have some resources that they can bring to show the children or lend to you?
- Can you display posters and information about oral health for children and parents?
- Can you provide children with their own named toothbrushes in your setting to brush their teeth during the daytime?