

Top tips for teeth

Information for dental professionals:

The problem with sugar

Children are having nearly three times more sugar than they should. Too much sugar can lead to an internal build up of harmful fat. The presence of this fat around vital organs can cause weight gain and serious diseases in the future, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

National Child Measurement Programme data has shown that the prevalence of obesity continues to rise for children in reception. In 2016/17 almost a quarter of reception age children were measured as being overweight or obese.¹ As you know, too much sugar can also cause tooth decay, which is the most common reason for hospital admissions in children aged 5-9 years.² 12% of 3-year-olds are presenting with visible tooth decay, with this figure increasing to nearly 25% in 5-year-olds.²

Sugar reduction has a clear role to play in maintaining oral health in children, and we know that you take this seriously. We have produced the Top Tips for Teeth dental toolkit to support you in communicating good dental practise to parents in bitesize chunks.

By working together, we hope to get parents and kids talking and thinking about their dental health. In this toolkit you will find a range of resources to support conversations with those visiting your practice.

The toolkit has three key tips for parents:

- **Tip 1:** Be sugar smart – make healthier food and drink choices by swapping out sugar.
- **Tip 2:** Visit the dentist regularly – parents might not realise that trips to an NHS dentist are free for pregnant women and anyone under the age of 18 (19 if in full time education).
- **Tip 3:** Brush your teeth twice a day – plus tips for tooth brushing, recommended toothpaste amounts and the positive effects of fluoride.

How to be sugar smart

Here is some information you can share with parents about sugar:

- 4-6 year olds should have no more than 19g of sugar a day (5 sugar cubes)
- 7-10 year olds should have no more than 24g of sugar a day (6 sugar cubes)
- 11+ year olds should have no more than 30g of sugar a day (7 sugar cubes)
- Avoid sugary food and drinks before bedtime
- Sugary foods should be eaten less often and only at mealtimes
- Sugary drinks have no place in a child's daily diet. The best drinks are lower fat milks and water
- Fruit and vegetable juices contain vitamins and minerals and can count as one of a child's five a day. However, intake should be limited to 150ml a day and should only be consumed at mealtimes
- Parents don't need to worry about sugar in lower fat milks or plain low fat, lower sugar yoghurts
- Don't replace sugary snacks with salty ones. Recommend snacks such as plain homemade popcorn or rice cakes

What is Start4Life?

Start4Life encourages and equips parents-to-be and parents to adopt the behaviours that will give their children a healthy start in life and help prevent childhood obesity and related illnesses. It focuses on breastfeeding and healthy weaning, offering parents a range of resources to help build their confidence to master and sustain these key activities, and lay the foundation for future healthy behaviours.



What is Change4Life?

Change4Life is a society-wide movement that encourages young families to make positive changes to their diet and activity levels. The initiative was started to tackle the growing trend of childhood obesity and obesity-related illnesses, with a particular focus on reducing sugar intake in children.



Change4Life is now a trusted and recognised brand, with 97% of mothers with children aged 5-11 associating us with healthy eating.³

Included in this toolkit

By working together, we hope to get parents and kids talking and thinking about their dental health. This toolkit contains:

- A 'conversation starter' badge for you or someone in your practice to wear
- Posters to use in your dental practice
- Wallet sized leaflets you can give to any patients who are pregnant or are responsible for young children

If you would like to order more of any of these items, please contact partnerships@phe.gov.uk (while stocks last).



Digital resources

We have a range of free digital resources available for you to download on Public Health England's [Campaign Resource Centre](#):

- [Social media toolkit](#) – containing suggested posts and images that you can put on your social feeds and share with your patients.
- [TV screensavers/short video clip](#) – these files are available to download and display in your dental practice.

Change4Life Food Scanner app

Encourage parents and carers to download the app. It will help them make healthier food choices by showing just how much sugar, saturated fat and salt is in everyday food and drink. The free app can be downloaded from the iTunes store or Google Play.

Public Health England resources and information:

Delivering better oral health: An evidence-based toolkit for prevention

Evidence based toolkit to support dental teams in improving patient's oral and general health.

<http://po.st/DBOH>

A quick guide to a healthy mouth in children

A fact sheet from Delivering Better Oral Health that summarises simple steps parents, carers and children can take to protect and improve dental health.

<http://po.st/QG>

PHE Guidance: Health matters: Child dental health

Resource outlining how health professionals can help prevent tooth decay in under 5s, as part of giving every child the best start in life.

<http://po.st/CDH>

References:

1. <http://digital.nhs.uk/catalogue/PUB30113>, National Child Measurement Programme – England, 2016-17
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-child-dental-health/health-matters-child-dental-health>
3. Change4Life Sugar Smart Campaign Evaluation, General Population Survey with 1,000 parents, Kantar Public, 2016

For more information:

If you have any questions about any of the information in this letter or would like to find out more about the work we do, please email partnerships@phe.gov.uk