

Keep Suffolk

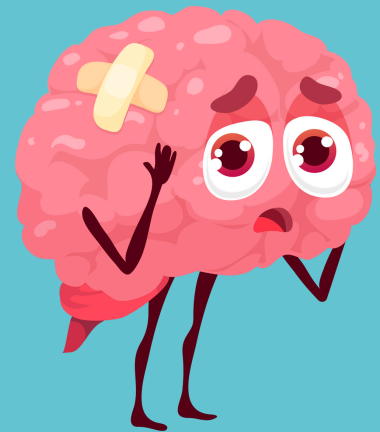
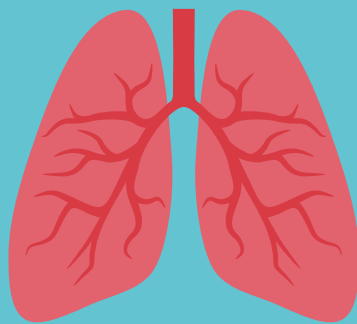
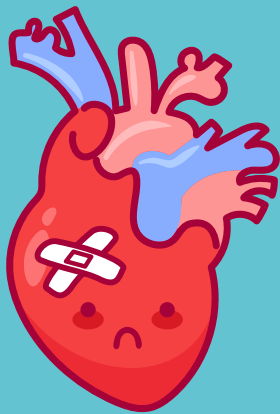
Smiling



**Oral Health advice for
Older Children and
Teenagers**

Why does Oral Health matter?

Poor oral health can have a negative impact on daily life. Not looking after our teeth can lead to toothache, gum problems, tooth decay or bad breath which have a knock-on effect to our self-esteem and social life.



Looking after our teeth not only means a healthy smile, but it can also help our overall health. Poor oral health can lead to longer term health issues such as heart problems, issues with our lungs and even brain cell damage.

By following a few simple tips, you can make sure that you can be confident in your smile.



Brushing and Flossing

You should be brushing your teeth twice a day for at least two minutes. Last thing before bed and one other time of the day - usually the morning.



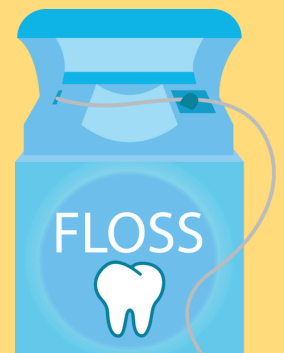
Hint: Using a timer or a favourite song can be useful to help you brush for the right length of time.



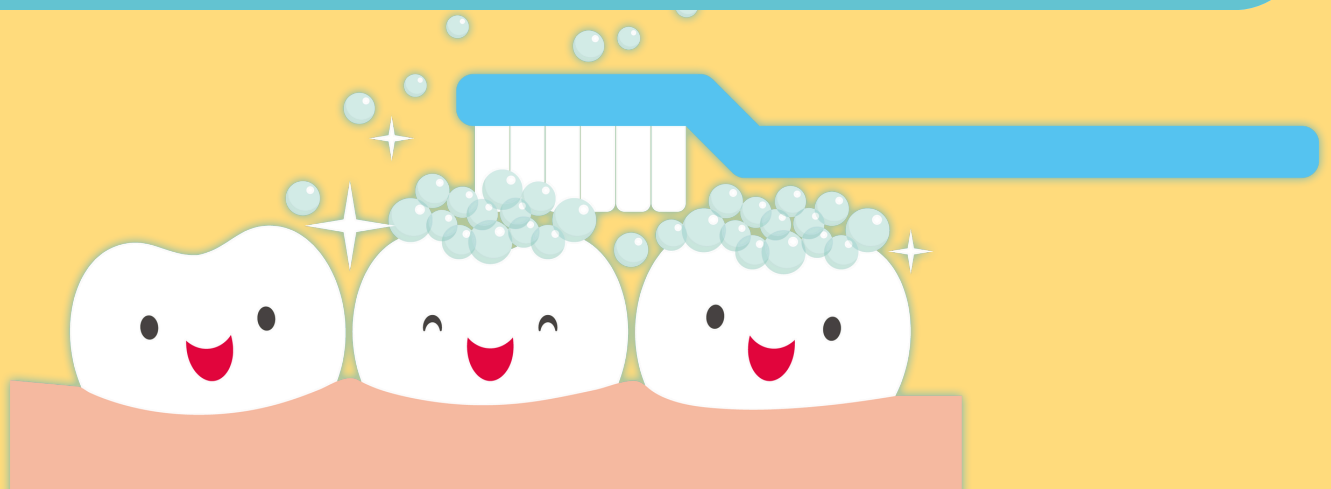
Spit out excess toothpaste after brushing - do not rinse with water or mouthwash!

Rinsing washes away the fluoride which is key in strengthening your teeth's enamel. You should also avoid drinking straight after brushing.

Use floss or interdental brushes between your teeth once a day to remove any plaque or bits of food that brushing doesn't reach.



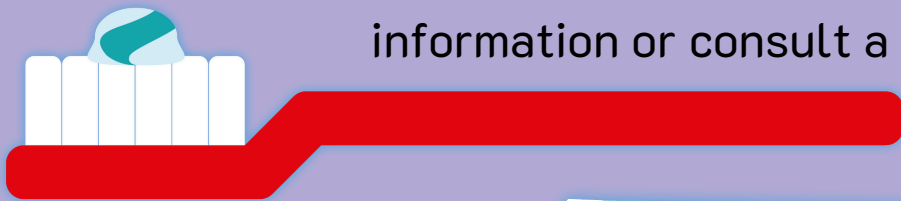
Healthy gums don't bleed! If you see blood while brushing, spend a little more time focusing your brushing around the gum line. **If the issue persists, consult a dentist.**



Toothpaste

Fluoride is essential for dental health as it helps strengthen tooth enamel, making them more resistant to tooth decay. It also reduces the amount of acid that the bacteria on your teeth can produce.

When brushing your teeth, use a pea sized amount of toothpaste that contains 1,350 – 1,500ppm fluoride. Check the toothpaste packaging for this information or consult a dentist.



You may be recommended to use mouthwash if you have braces or another orthodontic appliance.

If this is the case, you should only use alcohol-free fluoride mouthwash (unless instructed otherwise by a dentist) at a different time than you brush your teeth.

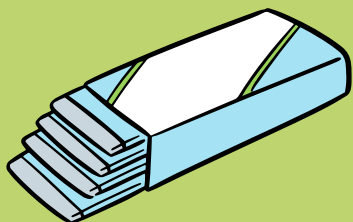
Food and drink

Every time you eat or drink something sugary or acidic the chances of tooth decay increase. Instead of having sugary foods and drinks frequently, keep them to mealtimes.



For snacks between mealtimes consider the following options:

- Fresh fruit
- Fresh vegetables
- Toast (with a savoury topping)
- Breads and breadsticks
- Crackers and cheese
- Plain yoghurt
- Nuts
- Plain popcorn



Chewing sugar free gum for around 20 minutes after meals can be useful – it stimulates saliva flow which naturally cleanses the mouth and reduces acidity levels.

Food and drink



Fruit juices are a great source of vitamins and minerals but have high acidity levels. To make it safer for teeth, keep juices to mealtimes.

Fizzy drinks, sports drinks and energy drinks all have high amounts of sugar that you may not think about - even sugar free versions have high acidity levels. To reduce the risk of dental erosion and decay, use a straw when drinking fizzy drinks to reduce contact with teeth.

Limiting these types of drinks to mealtimes can also reduce the risk.






Drinking water throughout the day, especially after meals and snacks, is a great way to stay hydrated as well as helping to wash away food particles and acidity.

Orthodontic Care



Braces are used to straighten and move teeth to improve their function and appearance. There are three main types of orthodontic appliance used:

-  Fixed braces (often referred to as train-tracks)
-  Removable braces
-  Retainers

It is essential to maintain good oral health to ensure your braces can be successful and to avoid dental problems from occurring. Below are some tips on how you can do this:

- **Avoid foods that are hard, sticky or chewy** as these can damage your braces – cutting up harder foods, such as apples, into smaller pieces and chewing them with your back teeth can help avoid breakages.
- **Avoid fizzy drinks** of all kinds as these can damage your teeth with the braces on, leaving permanent marks when the braces are removed.
- **Brush after you have eaten** any meals as food often gets trapped around the brace and can damage your teeth – make sure you angle the toothbrush around the brackets and don't forget to brush your gums.
- **Always rinse removable braces after eating** or remove before eating if this has been recommended to you by a dentist.
- Use interdental brushes or a single tufted toothbrush to **clean under the wire and between brackets** to remove any food particles or plaque in these areas, as your normal toothbrush can't reach them.

Wisdom Teeth

There are usually 4 wisdom teeth - one in each corner of the mouth. They come through at the very back behind your other teeth.



Wisdom teeth usually come through during your late teens or early twenties, after your other 28 teeth are already there. This means that there isn't always room for the wisdom teeth to grow properly.

Due to the lack of space, the mouth can become overcrowded, and the wisdom teeth can grow at an angle or get stuck and only partially emerge. This can cause problems like food and bacteria getting trapped, which may lead to dental issues such as:

- Tooth decay
- Gum disease
- Infections



If you are experiencing severe pain or discomfort from your wisdom teeth, you should make an appointment with a dentist who will advise on the best next steps.

Ensuring you attend regular dental check ups in late teenage years is key to making sure that any possible issues can be addressed early.

Mouth guards for sports



Mouth guards are specifically designed to help protect your teeth from damage or trauma when playing sports.

A mouth guard should especially be worn while playing contact sports to help avoid broken teeth, root damage and cheek and lip injuries.

Mouth guards can be bought ready-made or be custom-made to fit your mouth specifically. **We would always recommend that a custom mouth guard is used to ensure proper fit and full protection.**

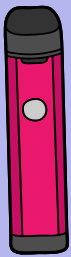
A less expensive option is a 'boil and bite' style mouth guard. Unlike less customisable shop bought options, these can be bought from sports shops and still allow you to create a more personalised fit. By placing the mouth guard in boiling water, the material becomes softer, allowing you to bite down and leave an imprint of your teeth, improving the fit.

It is important to follow any instructions included closely to ensure that the process is done properly to improve fit.



Avoiding Harmful Habits

Smoking tobacco can cause tooth staining, gum disease, tooth loss and more seriously – mouth cancer. Smoking cannabis can also have the same effects.



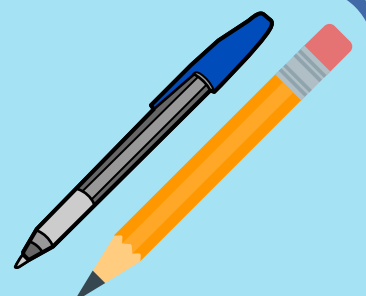
While **vaping** is often marketed as a safer alternative to smoking, it still poses a significant risk to oral health. Vaping can lead to issues such as a dry mouth, gum disease, plaque buildup, oral infections and can contribute to tooth decay.

Alcohol can increase your chances of tooth decay due to its sugar and acidity content. It is also a contributing factor to mouth cancer – smoking alongside drinking alcohol increases the risk further.



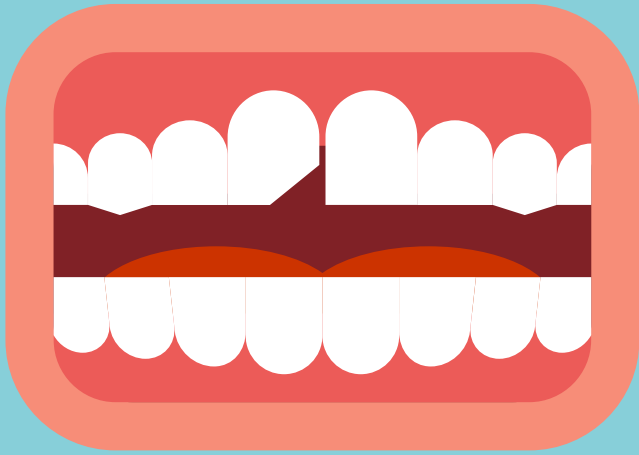
Mouth piercings such as tongue, lip or cheek piercings, can put oral health at risk. Not only can these piercings lead to infections, but there is also a risk of the jewellery chipping or breaking teeth and affecting speech.

Chewing on objects such as pens, pencils or your nails can not only cause infections transmitted by bacteria but can also chip or wear down your teeth. It is suggested that this should be avoided, for help with this contact your dentist for support.



What to do in an emergency

If a tooth has been knocked out or a piece of your tooth has broken off, put it in milk or saliva (by spitting into a container) and take it to a dentist. The dentist may be able to reinsert the tooth or glue the broken piece back on.



**Do not go to the GP.
They will not be able
to give you dental
treatment.**

For urgent dental treatment:

- **call a dentist** – if they're closed, their answerphone may say what to do

If you do not have a dentist or cannot get an emergency appointment:

- **call 111** – they can advise you what to do
- **find a dentist near you** – ask for an emergency appointment

Ensuring you attend regular dental check ups is key to making sure that any possible issues can be addressed early.

To find an NHS Dentist scan the QR code or visit
www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist





The Healthy Living Service

The Healthy Living Service offers support to children, young people, and their families to help remove the barriers to achieving a healthy weight and exploring ways to overcome those challenges.

To find out more scan the QR code or visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/childrens-health/healthy-living-service



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Available in other languages

For more information please contact us at

childrenandfamilies@suffolk.gov.uk

