



Good dental health from the first tooth

Eruption of the first milk tooth marks a new stage in the child's development. It is important to create good habits for diet and dental health early on.

Teething

The front teeth in the lower jaw usually break out first. Normally this happens when the child is 6-8 months. Next, the front teeth in the upper jaw usually erupt, followed by the front molars, the canines and finally the back molars. Your child will have all their baby teeth, 10 in the upper and 10 in the lower jaw, by the age of 3.

It is common for children to have itchy gums when the teeth break out, and they usually want to chew on something. Give them a suitable teething toy of hard rubber or plastic, without sharp edges. Some children become uneasy and may experience some discomfort, but teething should not cause high and prolonged fever.

Brushing

Brushing of the child's teeth should start as soon as the first tooth is visible in the mouth. Use a small, soft toothbrush and a barely visible amount of fluoride toothpaste. Children's toothpaste may be favoured since it has a mild taste. Increase the amount of fluoride toothpaste to the equivalent of your baby's fingernail at one year of age, and to a pea-sized amount at age 3. At 5-6 years, the amount can be increased further. The Directorate of Health recommends that children should be assisted with tooth brushing until they can perform it well enough themselves, usually around 10 years of age.

Fluoride toothpaste needs time to work, so avoid food and drink up to an hour after tooth brushing. If you are not using fluoride toothpaste, or if your child needs extra fluoride, fluoride tablets may be a good option. Follow the advice you get at the public health/dental clinic.



Caries

Sugar causes holes (caries) in the teeth. When the child eats or drinks something containing sugar, the bacteria in their mouth will produce acid that can dissolve the enamel and cause holes. It all depends on how often the child eats or drinks something sweet. Saliva neutralizes the acid produced after each meal. Therefore, it is important not to eat or drink anything sugary between meals, and especially during the night when less saliva is produced.

Breastfeeding

Breast milk contains milk sugar that to some extent can be converted to acid. Saliva production is reduced at night, which increases the risk of tooth decay. Frequent breast-feeding or bottled milk at night should therefore be avoided after the child reaches one year of age.

Positioning of teeth

Sucking on the thumb or a pacifier gives good comfort to small children. Sucking habits can cause misalignment of the teeth, but usually the teeth will come into place by themselves if the child stops sucking on their thumb/pacifier before they start losing their baby teeth.

Accidents

A fall or blow to the mouth can damage one or more teeth. It is therefore important to contact the nearest dental clinic to register the accident and get proper follow-up.

Organization of the public dental health services

The public dental service is responsible for the dental care of children and adolescents from 0 to 18 years of age. The children are called in for their first dental health check at the dental clinic the year they turn 3. Before that, the public health clinic (helsestasjonen) will follow-up the child's dental health and habits. They will be referred to the public dental service by the public health nurse/doctor, if they need a dental examination prior to the usual check at 3 years.

Contact your nearest public dental clinic if you need additional information.