

GROWING UP

Your child's teeth: aged 6+



Losing their milk teeth marks an important part of growing up for any child. Adult teeth need to last a lifetime so this is the time to keep an eye on tooth development and any potential problems that may occur.

Adult teeth timetable

Between the ages of 6–13 is a busy time in your child's mouth as their 20 milk teeth are lost and replaced by 28 adult teeth. A further four molars will erupt – known as the wisdom teeth – in their late teens.

Time to reinforce a regular brushing routine

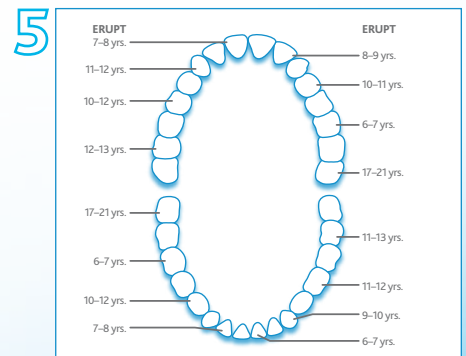
Although it is important that you supervise occasionally, by the age of 7 they should be accustomed to brushing their own teeth to remove the build-up of plaque. This is a sticky film of bacteria, food debris and dead cells that forms on enamel surfaces, between teeth and along the gum margin.

Ensure your child is diet aware

Your child also needs to be aware that what they eat and drink has an impact on their oral health. Diets high in sugar, frequent snacking and fizzy drinks expose teeth to acid attack and increase the risk of decay.

Did you know?

- 1 Some cultures mark the loss of milk (also known as primary, deciduous or baby) teeth with the arrival of the tooth fairy, while in others, children get a visit from a mouse.
- 2 Adult (permanent) teeth begin to form while still in the womb but do not begin to erupt until the age of 6 or 7.
- 3 Between the ages of 10–13 your child will have lost their final milk teeth, however, it may take another 7–10 years before their wisdom teeth appear.
- 4 As one of the most common diseases in the world, tooth decay (caries) is widespread – an estimated 60% to 90% of school children are affected.



There are four different types of permanent teeth – incisors, canines, premolars and molars – designed to make short work of the food we eat.

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Spot early problems with regular dental check-ups

Many children don’t visit the dentist until they need to have treatment or they are in pain. A routine check-up every 6 months from an early age will help your child get used to the surroundings of the surgery and enable your dental practitioner to monitor the development of their permanent teeth and spot any potential problems.

If you – as a parent – are uneasy about dental treatments, it is possible that you will pass your fears on to your child. If you have any concerns, discuss these with your dentist away from them.

Tell me about...

Tooth decay and fillings

You might not be able to tell if your child has tooth decay just by looking, as the structure of the tooth is initially destroyed below the surface. Your dentist is able to detect any decay and take the appropriate action to prevent decay spreading. If a filling is required, this involves removing all traces of decay using a dental drill and filling the resulting cavity with a silver-coloured amalgam or white material.

Pit and fissure sealants

Sealants are a safe and painless way of protecting adult teeth from decay and your dentist will advise if this treatment is suitable for your child. The sealant is specifically designed to form a hard, transparent shield and is usually applied to children’s permanent premolars and molars.

Lost (avulsed) teeth

When an adult tooth is lost, it may be possible to save it if quick action is taken.

- Rinse with milk if it is very dirty.
- Hold by the crown (avoid handling the root) and put it back into the socket firmly.
- Get the child to bite on a clean handkerchief for about 15–20 minutes or until emergency dental treatment is found.
- If the tooth cannot be easily replaced, it has the best chance of survival if placed inside the child’s cheek while you seek treatment – but this will depend on your child’s age and emotional state as there may be a risk of swallowing. Alternatively, keep it in milk.
- Do not allow the tooth to dry out and do not clean it with disinfectant.

Your dental practitioner is experienced in caring for children’s teeth and will help them maintain a good oral hygiene routine and give advice on diet. They will be able to fully explain any dental treatments that may be required.

Checklist for healthy teeth

1 **Keep diet on track:** limit the amount of refined sugary foods and drinks, and preferably restrict these to mealtimes.

2 **Reduce risk of acid attacks:** encourage your child to opt for low-sugar snacks and suggest that they drink sugary drinks through a straw to avoid contact with teeth.



Two minute rule: brushing for at least 2 minutes morning and night with a fluoride toothpaste not only cleans but also allows more time for fluoride to work and helps keep tooth enamel strong. After brushing they should spit but not rinse to allow fluoride to continue protecting teeth.

4 **Choose a fluoride toothpaste:** the introduction of fluoride toothpaste is one of the most important factors in reducing dental decay. Fluoride helps strengthen teeth making them more resistant to decay.

5 **Get them involved:** by allowing your child to choose their own (grown-up) brush and a toothpaste they like the taste of may help to motivate brushing.

6 **Dental check-ups:** regular dental visits every 6 months are a good routine to help keep your child’s teeth healthy.