



A Little Trip to the Dentist: Introduction

Following the success in the West Midlands, we are rolling out 'A Little Trip to the Dentist' campaign across the East Midlands.

This toolkit will give you the resources you need to deliver the NHS England and NHS Improvement campaign which encourages families to take their babies to a dentist.

You might know that despite NHS dental visits being free for babies and children:

- Only around 21% of children under two in England are having their teeth checked by an NHS dentist.
- Nationally a quarter of five-year olds already have tooth decay with an average of three or four teeth affected.
- Around 12% of children may have decay in their teeth by the age of three.
- Every 10 minutes a child in England has a rotten tooth removed in hospital.
- Across the Midlands, by the age of five years, around a quarter of all children will have tooth decay, and in the worst areas it is around a third of all five-year-olds.
- In Leicester, for example, two out of every five (40%) five-year-old children in the city have already experienced tooth decay.
- Almost 9 out of 10 hospital tooth extractions among children aged under five years are due to preventable tooth decay.

By the age of five many children could already have tooth decay, many of whom may only have been to the dentist when they are in pain or the decay is already so severe they need to have teeth removed.

We want parents and carers to take their babies to the dentist sooner rather than later, even before their first teeth come through.

An early dental visit is more than looking in a baby's mouth:

- families get information, advice and support for caring for teeth when they come through
- the dentist can look out for problems at a young age
- dentists and their teams can help families get the best from tooth brushing, advice on sugar, healthy eating and drinking, teething and also offer preventative treatments.

A little trip to the dentist also helps them to get used to the sights, sounds and smells of a dental practice which is vital in ensuring children feel comfortable in that environment as they grow older.

The NHS Long Term plan is committed through the Starting Well Core initiative to support 24,000 dentists across England to see more children from a young age, to form good oral health habits, preventing tooth decay experienced by a quarter of England's five-year olds.

How to get involved

We will provide you with all the materials to run the campaign in your practice. You will receive a toolkit which contains:

- social media content
- articles for newsletters and website
- links to similar campaigns you can use
- contact details.

If you work in a dental practice, you can also use this toolkit to promote the availability of free NHS appointments for babies and children.

The main aim of the campaign is to increase the number of nought to two year olds accessing NHS Dentistry in the East Midlands. The main message of the campaign is:

Help your baby to grow their best smile and prevent tooth decay by taking a little trip to the dentist even before their first teeth come through.

Toolkit themes

- January – Babies and sugar, healthy teeth and healthy weight
- February – Looking after mouths during pregnancy and weaning
- March – Toothbrushing for the very young



A LITTLE TRIP TO THE DENTIST

Campaign toolkit:
Babies and Sugar, Healthy Teeth and Healthy Weight

Month One – Babies and sugar, healthy teeth and healthy weight

This month's materials focus on the impact sugar can have on a baby's emerging teeth and general health and explores healthy weight and healthy teeth. We'll be highlighting the importance of dental check-ups early on, while emphasising how a healthy diet and regular physical activity contribute to maintaining a healthy weight in childhood and beyond.

Eating too much sugar can lead to tooth decay and unhealthy weight in children. As babies gradually start to eat like the rest of the family it's important that they aren't introduced to too many 'free sugars'. These can be found in all sorts of food and drink including puddings, buns, custards, biscuits, cereal bars, flavoured yoghurts, breakfast cereals, squash and flavoured milk. Many parents may not know that things like unsweetened fruit juices, fruit purees, smoothies, and ingredients such as fruit juice concentrate, syrups, nectars and molasses are high in free sugars.

A healthy balanced diet based on starchy foods, protein foods, vegetables, fruit, and dairy without free sugars is best for babies' teeth. It's a good idea to get babies used to the different textures and tastes of fruit and vegetables themselves rather than too many ready-made juices, purees or 'fruit equivalent' snacks which are high in sugar.

Giving babies a varied and balanced diet alongside breast or formula milk, which provides most of the nutrients they'll need, will help set them up for a lifetime of healthier eating, which will mean better general health and a reduced risk of tooth decay.

Early visits to the dentist can help families get a better understanding of the effects sugar can have, offering a valuable opportunity to get advice on reducing sugars in diets. Dentists can also give useful tips on how the way we consume food might make a difference. For example, eating dried fruit as part of a meal instead of a separate snack reduces the impact the sugar can have on teeth.

It also ensures that a dentist can spot problems before they get worse and highlight any areas in an oral health routine which could need improvements. And if no treatment is needed, it's a great way of helping families and children feel comfortable, making future check-ups much easier.

The amount of sugar that children consume on a daily basis is also a major contributing factor to gaining weight, along with low levels of physical activity. The [National Diet and Nutrition Survey](#) found that sugary drinks account for 30% of four to 10 year old's daily sugar intake. Children's consumption of added or processed sugars significantly exceeds the maximum recommended level.

Awareness Days

If you want other reasons to talk about babies taking a little trip to the dentist below are relevant upcoming awareness days, you could organise activity on.

- 20-26 January: Sugar Awareness Week

Statistics

- Children are consuming on average two to three times more than the recommended amount of free sugars.
- Children have already exceeded the maximum recommended sugar intake for an 18-year-old by the time they reach their tenth birthday.
- On average, children consume the equivalent of around eight excess sugar cubes each day, adding up to around 2,800 excess sugar cubes per year.
- Across the country, 9.5% of children in reception are obese, and this rises to 20.1% of year 6 children.

Social media content

Below you will find content for use on your social media channels. Please feel free to adapt and amend as required for your audience, or simply copy and paste the below. You may also use the following as inspiration to create some of your own content.

Note: please use photographs you have appropriate consent for, or use the images supplied alongside this toolkit.

Facebook posts

Post one

Did you know children are consuming up to three times the recommended sugar intake, with many 10 year olds having already reached the maximum suggested amount for an 18-year-old? Sugar is not only dangerous for babies and children's developing teeth, but can have wider health implications including type 2 diabetes. Taking #ALittleTripToTheDentist with children, even before teeth come through, can help parents get useful advice on how to limit sugar and what to look out for in ready-made foods or drinks. Find a local NHS dentist:

www.nhs.uk/service-search

Post two

Your baby might not have teeth yet, but that doesn't mean you don't need to think about the sugar they're consuming. Habits can start very early in life and babies tend to prefer the foods they get used to. Too much sugar risks damaging emerging teeth, becoming overweight and even getting type 2 diabetes. Lots of snacks aimed at babies and children contain sugar but you often won't find 'sugar' listed on food packaging. There are plenty of other words to look out for including glucose, maltose, fructose, molasses, fruit juice concentrate and more. Take #ALittleTripToTheDentist with your baby for more advice on how to limit sugar and for tips on developing good oral health routines from the beginning. Find a local NHS dentist: www.nhs.uk/service-search

Post three

Many drinks can be harmful to your baby's developing teeth and general health. It's a good idea to get babies used to the different tastes and textures of fruit and vegetables instead of too many ready-made juices, purees and snacks which can be very high in sugar. Avoid fruit juices and smoothies as babies don't need them. Drinks with added sugars such as squashes and fizzy drinks should never be given to a baby as not only can the sugar damage teeth and cause health issues, but they can fill your baby up meaning they can miss out on important nutrients from food. You can get more advice like this by taking #ALittleTripToTheDentist – find one local to you: www.nhs.uk/service-search

Post four

Children should take #ALittleTripToTheDentist regularly throughout their development, but did you know visits should start even before their teeth come through? There are lots of benefits to early check-ups – not only can your dentist check everything is developing as it should be, but they can provide useful advice around developing healthy routines. Even if they don't manage to look in your baby's mouth, early visits get them used to the sights, smells and sounds of a practice making them feel much more comfortable in the future. Plus, children are seen by NHS dentists for free – so find one near you and book an appointment: www.nhs.uk/service-search

Post five

Every 10 minutes a child in England has a rotten tooth removed. Often the decay which results in an extraction can easily be prevented, simply by taking #ALittleTripToTheDentist early on, even before teeth come through. Dentists offer useful advice around what food or drink to avoid to help protect teeth, can help you get the most out of tooth brushing and can spot issues before they have chance to get any worse. Don't forget, children are seen for free by NHS dentists. Find one local to you: www.nhs.uk/service-search

Post six

When you start introducing your little one to solid foods it's good to include a wide range of food groups. This ensures they get all the energy and healthy nutrients they need. Fruit, vegetables, starchy foods, protein and dairy are all important ingredients to make up a balanced diet for your baby. Taking your baby to the dentist before their first tooth and a healthy lifestyle, help encourage good oral health from the beginning and as your child grows. Start4Life has lots more useful tips, take a look:

<https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/what-to-feed-your-baby/around-6-months/>

#ALittleTripToTheDentist

Post seven

Everyone loves finger food, and what better way to show your child that eating solid foods can be fun too? Cut fruit and vegetables into different shapes and slices to add some excitement to their meal. Getting plenty of fruit and vegetables is important for babies as it helps promote a healthier lifestyle and good oral health. You're encouraged to take your baby to the dentist. Find one local to you: www.nhs.uk/service-search

#ALittleTripToTheDentist

Post eight

Remember babies don't need salt or sugar. Avoid adding them to your little one's food to encourage a healthy balanced diet and good oral health. Babies shouldn't eat salty foods as salt is not good for their kidneys and sugary foods can cause tooth decay. It's also wise you take your baby to their dentist before their first tooth. Get more helpful, healthy tips here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/what-to-feed-your-baby/around-6-months/>

#ALittleTripToTheDentist

Post nine

When your baby reaches 7 to 9 months, you can introduce three solid meals a day to their diet. However, NHS guidance advises to steer clear of snacks. If you find that your baby is hungry in between meals, you can offer extra milk feeds. This helps them maintain a healthy weight and also prevents tooth decay. For more useful tips take your little one to the dentist before their first tooth. Find a local practice here: www.nhs.uk/service-search

#ALittleTripToTheDentist

Post ten

To ensure your baby maintains a healthy weight it's best to start them off with a small amount of solid food once a day. It's important to make sure any solid foods do not have any added salt or sugar as this can be bad for their kidneys and teeth. Taking your baby to the dentist regularly and early on can help prevent the need for tooth extractions later in life. For more top tips on healthy eating for your little one, visit:

<https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/what-to-feed-your-baby/around-6-months/>

#ALittleTripToTheDentist

Twitter Pack

Children are consuming up to 3 times the recommended daily sugar intake, and with fewer than 1 in 5 children having been to the dentist before they're 2 #ALittleTripToTheDentist is more important than ever. Find an NHS dentist: www.nhs.uk/service-search @NHSMidlands

Children eating too much sugar can damage teeth & cause them to become overweight, increasing their chances of getting type 2 diabetes. Families can get advice on healthier diets with #ALittleTripToTheDentist: www.nhs.uk/service-search @NHSMidlands

Avoid fruit juices and smoothies before 12 months as babies don't need them.

#ALittleTripToTheDentist @NHSMidlands

When using a bottle or trainer cup, only fill it with breast milk, formula milk or water and do not add anything else to the feed. Adding other food and drink can mean added sugar which could damage a baby's emerging teeth #ALittleTripToTheDentist @NHSMidlands

Comfort sucking from a bottle containing sweetened drinks causes tooth decay in young children. Drinks flow very slowly through a teat, which means the sugary substance will be in contact with their teeth for longer. #ALittleTripToTheDentist @NHSMidlands

Honey shouldn't be given to babies under 1 as not only is it bad for their teeth, but it also contains bacteria that can lead to infant botulism, a serious illness that can make your baby very unwell. #ALittleTripToTheDentist @NHSMidlands

Squash, fizzy drinks, milkshakes and fruit juice are damaging to teeth, have very few nutrients, and can fill babies up, meaning they can miss out on other important nutrients from food. #ALittleTripToTheDentist @NHSMidlands

From 6mths, babies should be encouraged to drink from a free-flow cup to help protect their teeth as they learn to sip. It might be messy at first, but with patience your baby will soon learn and the risk of tooth decay will be reduced. #ALittleTripToTheDentist @NHSMidlands

The @BDA_Dietitians has some great tips on sugar and how it affects our health. They've also highlighted some of the ways added sugars can be listed on labels – it doesn't always say 'sugar!' <https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/sugar> #ALittleTripToTheDentist @NHSMidlands

#ALittleTripToTheDentist regularly and even before teeth come through can be the difference between developing healthy routines and needing treatment later in life. Children are seen for free at NHS dentists – find one local to you: www.nhs.uk/service-search @NHSMidlands

A dentist doesn't need to look in your baby's mouth during a check-up to make it worthwhile. #ALittleTripToTheDentist early gets them used to the environment, making later appointments go smoother. Find a local NHS dentist: www.nhs.uk/service-search @NHSMidlands

Planning #ALittleTripToTheDentist for yourself? Why not book an appointment for your children at the same time? They go free and early visits are invaluable in helping to develop good routines. @NHSMidlands

It's a good idea to get babies used to the tastes and textures of fruit and veg instead of ready-made juices, purees and snacks which can be very high in sugar. Get tips on safe weaning: <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/safe-weaning/> #ALittleTripToTheDentist @NHSMidlands

Babies don't need teeth to take #ALittleTripToTheDentist. You can get useful advice on what to look out for as they develop and help build the best routines to avoid problems later in life. Find a local NHS dentist: www.nhs.uk/service-search @NHSMidlands

Babies don't need salt or sugar added to their food. Salt is not good for their kidneys and sugary foods can cause tooth decay. Get helpful healthy tips:

<https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/what-to-feed-your-baby/around-6-months/>

#ALittleTripToTheDentist @NHSMidlands

Introducing your little one to a range of food groups ensures they get all the energy and nutrients they need and gets them used to a range of tastes early. A healthy balanced diet also encourages good oral health. <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/what-to-feed-your-baby/around-6-months/> #ALittleTripToTheDentist @NHSMidlands

It's estimated that around 12% of children have some tooth decay by as early as 3 years. #ALittleTripToTheDentist regularly and even before teeth come through can help spot issues before they have chance to get worse. Find a local NHS dentist: www.nhs.uk/service-search @NHSMidlands

To ensure your baby maintains a healthy weight it's best to start them off with a small amount of solid food, once-a-day. Avoid sugary snacks as they can cause tooth decay. #ALittleTripToTheDentist @NHSMidlands

When your baby is ready to start weaning introduce a wide range of flavours and textures, avoiding salt and sugar. This promotes good oral health and prevents tooth decay. Book #ALittleTripToTheDentist for your little one: <https://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Dentists/LocationSearch/3> @NHSMidlands

When your baby reaches between 7 and 9 months old, you can start them on three solid meals a day. Steer clear of snacks. If your baby is hungry in between meals, you can offer extra milk feeds to help keep their teeth healthy. #ALittleTripToTheDentist @NHSMidlands

The Start4Life website and @NHS_Parents have lots of top tips for a healthy start for you and baby: <https://bit.ly/2dZ4nsl> #ALittleTripToTheDentist @NHSMidlands

Help your little one grow their best smile by taking #ALittleTripToTheDentist – children are seen free at NHS dentists. Find a local dental practice at: www.nhs.uk/service-search

Website / newsletter articles

The following articles have been prepared for you to share in your newsletters or on websites. Two are aimed at patients and families, while the other two can be shared with staff. You are welcome to add information specific to your practice or organisation.

External facing articles (patient/family)

Reducing sugar with a little trip to the dentist

Your children could be consuming more sugar than you realise, putting them at risk of tooth decay, weight gain and even Type 2 diabetes. Simply taking a little trip to the dentist can help you better understand what food and drink contains sugar, what alternatives are out there and how to develop and maintain the best possible oral health routines.

Across the country, children are having up to three times the recommended amount of sugar every day with many 10 year olds having already exceeded the maximum suggested amount for 18 year olds.

Only 20% of two year olds have been to the dentist and tooth extraction is one of the leading causes of hospital admission in five to 10 year olds, so it's absolutely vital that children have check-ups regularly and from an early age – even before teeth come through.

A baby doesn't need to have teeth to have an appointment and the dentist doesn't even have to look in their mouth. Simply going and getting the chance to experience the sights, sounds and smells of a practice is invaluable in making later check-ups more comfortable.

There's also a host of useful tips you can get from your dentist about what food/drink is better for your baby's teeth and what to avoid.

Children are seen for free at NHS dentists, as are new mums up to a year after birth. You can find your nearest by visiting www.nhs.uk/service-search.

ENDS

A Little Trip To The Dentist

We understand that there is a lot for a new parent to think about in the first few weeks and months of a baby's life. A Little Trip To The Dentist – a campaign led by NHS England and NHS Improvement in the Midlands – focuses on the link between healthy weight and healthy teeth in babies and young children.

Childhood obesity and excess weight are significant issues for children and their families, with more than one in five children being overweight by the time they start primary school.

There can be serious implications for a child's physical and mental health, which can continue in to adulthood. The number of children with an unhealthy and potentially dangerous weight is a national public health concern.

A major contributing factor to obesity in children is their diet and nutrition, which often consists of foods which put them at high risk of tooth decay. A lack of physical activity and other environmental factors also have an impact.

Taking a little trip to the dentist, even before babies' first teeth have come through, is vital in developing positive oral health routines to prevent tooth decay later in life. The advice you can get from a dentist can also contribute to healthier diets and lifestyles, so do take your baby to the dentist as soon as you can. Find a local dentist at www.nhs.uk/service-search.

You can find more information on maintaining healthy weight for babies on the [NHS website](http://www.nhs.uk).

ENDS

Internal facing articles

Earlier and regular visits to the dentist can tackle excessive sugar consumption

A campaign led by NHS England and NHS Improvement in the East Midlands is calling for more parents to start dental visits early, even before their babies have teeth. Currently only 20% of two year olds have had a check-up, but many children are consuming up to three times the recommended amount of sugar, with some 10 year olds having already exceeded the maximum suggested amount for 18 year olds.

A little trip to the dentist at a young age can help families get the advice they need to start the best possible oral health routines from the beginning. Dentists can advise on how sugar affects teeth and how to reduce it by recognising what foods and drinks are have high amounts plus what to look out for on the label.

Excessive sugar consumption can result in tooth decay, and ultimately hospitalisation to have teeth removed. Eating too much sugar can also result in a child becoming overweight and putting themselves at risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

The campaign sees dentists across the East Midlands encouraging more families of very young children to book an appointment. They don't need teeth for a check-up and a dentist doesn't even need to look in their mouth, as simply getting them used to the environment is great for making them feel more comfortable with regular check-ups as they get older.

Seeing an NHS dentist is free for babies and children or young people under 18, pregnant women and mums who have had a baby in the last 12 months. Families can find a local NHS practice by visiting www.nhs.uk/service-search.

ENDS

A Little Trip To The Dentist

There's lots for new parents to think about in the first few weeks and months of a baby's life. That's why we're supporting NHS England and NHS Improvement's campaign – *A Little Trip To The Dentist* – which is focusing on the relationship between healthy weight and healthy teeth in babies and young children.

Childhood obesity and excess weight are significant issues for children and their families, with more than one in five children being overweight by the time they start primary school.

A major contributing factor to obesity in children is their diet and nutrition, which often consists of foods which put them at high risk of tooth decay. A lack of physical activity and other environmental factors also have an impact.

Healthcare professionals play an important role in supporting families to take action. Working alongside other professionals and public health teams, you can influence the general population by delivering whole system approaches to tackling excess weight and reducing drivers, such as calorie intake and sedentary lifestyles.

Taking a little trip to the dentist, even before babies' first teeth have come through, is vital in developing positive oral health routines to prevent tooth decay later in life. The advice a family can get from a dentist can also contribute to healthier diets and lifestyles, so do encourage any families you might be working with to visit a dentist regularly.

You can find more information on maintaining healthy weight for babies on the [NHS website](#).

ENDS

Quiz

We have produced a quiz around sugar to be used with families either in waiting rooms or with a health professional. It is in a PDF format, but it can be provided in other file types too if you need it.

Links to resources for download

Below are a number of links to resources where you can download posters and booklets to display in your practice and give to patients.

Resource	Info	Notes
Public Health England's 'Top Tips for Teeth'	Resources to help you to communicate good oral health messages to parents in manageable chunks.	You will need to register for a Campaign Resource Centre account to download these resources. It is free and easy to do and will give you access to all of Public Health England's campaigns.
Video: Oral Health Awareness for babies	Produced by NHS England West Midlands' Local Dental Network, this short, cartoon video aims to highlight the benefits of good oral health and dental care from birth.	To be shared via social media or in any family facing communications.
Video: Growing up with healthy teeth	A 20 minute video from HENRY all about what we can do to help children grow up with healthy teeth.	Useful for staff training or to be shared via social media or in patient-facing communications.
Healthy Start	Parents can check if they are eligible for Healthy Start, which can provide free vouchers to spend on milk, plain fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables, and free vitamins.	
NHS website – how sugar affects our health & Change4Life sugar resources	Valuable information on sugar and the impact it can have on health, including tooth decay, weight and tips to cut down.	

Resource	Info	Notes
British Dietetic Association – sugar facts	Lots of information around sugar and how to tell if it's in foods.	
Start4Life baby pages	The Start4Life baby pages provide information about parenthood, from breastfeeding to vaccinations.	
Start4Life feeding your baby leaflet	This leaflet helps parents understand the benefits of breastfeeding, how to do it and other useful information.	Useful to download and share with parents
PHE: Promoting a healthier weight for children, young people and families	Provides advice around consistent messaging for communicating around healthy weight for children, young people and families. Includes infographics and training tools, as well as a video around child obesity.	
PHE Child Oral Health: applying All Our Health	This guide is part of 'All Our Health', a resource which helps health and care professionals prevent ill health and promote wellbeing as part of their everyday practice. The information will help front-line health and care staff use their trusted relationships with patients, families and communities to promote the benefits of good oral health for children.	
PHE Child Oral Health All Our Health elearning	This is a bite-sized session to give health and care professionals an overview of child oral health - including key evidence, data and signposting to trusted resources to help prevent illness, protect health and promote wellbeing	
Promoting healthy weight in children, young people and families: A resource to support local authorities	This resource aims to support local authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups, NHS providers, and voluntary and community sector organisations by providing in one document the latest evidence, resources and data to encourage a systematic approach to creating local environments that promote healthy weight in children.	
HM Government. Childhood Obesity. A Plan for Action.	Plan to significantly reduce England's rate of childhood obesity within the next ten years.	

Contact details for the campaign

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NHS England and NHS Improvement Midlands Communications team,
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