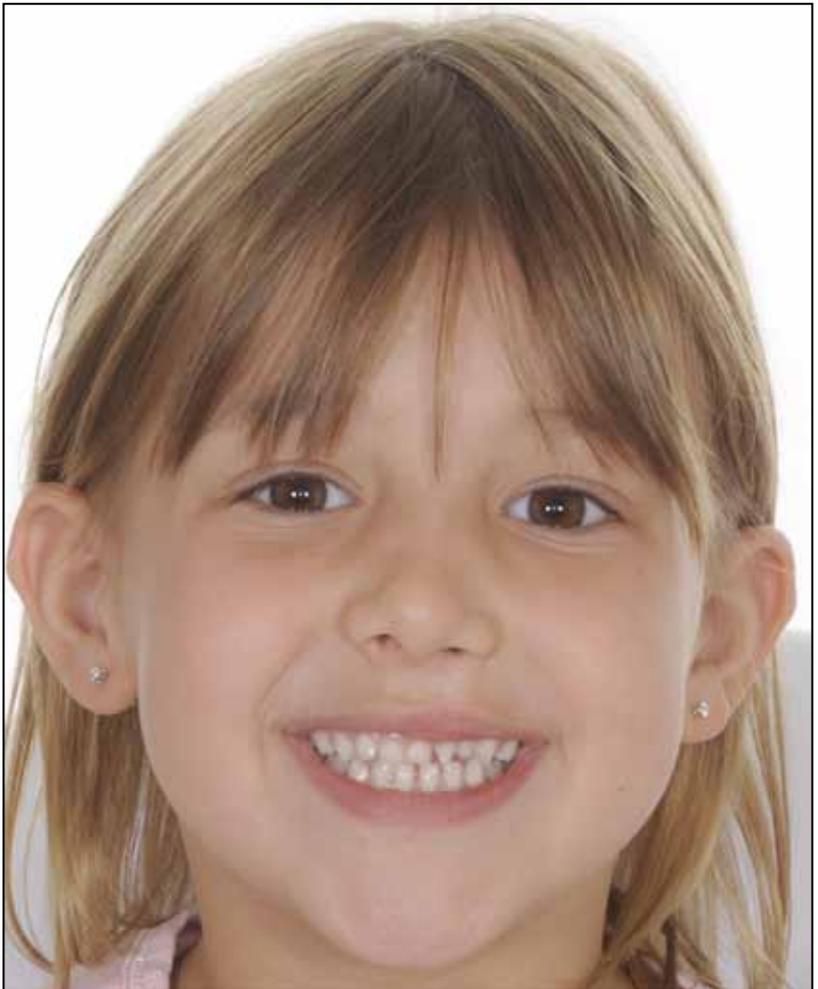


Spires Cleft Centre

# Caring for your Baby's First Teeth

Information for parents



Our aim is to help you to help your child to have a **happy smile, nice teeth with no pain.**

This leaflet gives you information about caring for your baby's teeth as they develop and into the future. It will hopefully answer some of the most commonly asked questions.

Children with cleft lip and/or palate have an increased risk of dental problems such as misshapen and/or missing or extra teeth at the area of the cleft. Also the tooth enamel may not form properly on the teeth around the cleft area.

Our teeth have to last us a long time. The way to make sure that they do is to start caring for them as they develop, so that your child will carry this on into adult life. Healthy teeth also ensure a better result if and when your child needs orthodontic work and bone grafting into the gum.

### **Q. When will my baby's teeth come through?**

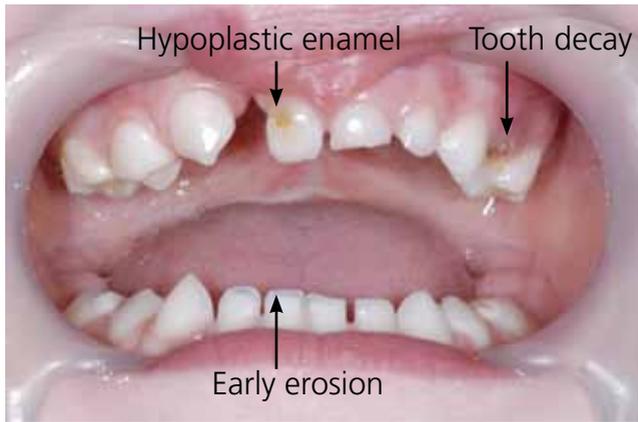
A. Babies' teeth on average come through at 6 months old, but this does vary. A full set of 20 baby teeth should develop by the age of 2 ½, although there may be some missing, extra or misshapen teeth at the cleft site. The teeth around the cleft site may also be slow to come through.

### **Q. When should I introduce a feeding cup?**

A. The World Health Organisation recommends that, where possible, babies should be fed only on breast/formula milk until they are 6 months old. From 4 months onwards you may introduce a feeding cup. It is advisable to give only water or milk from a cup. Drinking from a cup reduces the contact time of the fluid around the teeth. All juice, squash, fizzy drinks and even sugar free varieties will dissolve tooth enamel – so beware.

### **Q. What solid foods are best for teeth?**

A. Savoury foods such as cheese, vegetables and pasta are better than sweet foods. Savoury snacks such as rice cakes, carrot sticks, bread sticks, crisps (melt in the mouth variety) are better than sweet ones. If you give your child a sweet snack it is best to give this at meal times to reduce the number of acid attacks on the teeth. (Your Health Visitor will be able to give you advice on a balanced diet.) Avoid constant snacking as this will also reduce acid attacks.



### **Q. When should I start cleaning my baby's teeth?**

A. As soon as the first tooth appears. Use a small soft toothbrush, or to start off you can use a piece of gauze wrapped around a clean finger, with a small smear of fluoride toothpaste. Do this twice a day, preferably in the morning and last thing before bed. Once all the teeth have developed, use circular movements with the toothbrush. Clean the gums as well as the teeth and pay particular attention to areas that are difficult to get into (such as any misshapen teeth). Make brushing part of your child's daily routine, giving plenty of encouragement and praise. It is advisable to clean your child's teeth or supervise their teeth cleaning until at least the age of seven.

### **Q. What about fluoride?**

A. Fluoride can help to strengthen teeth but it is added to some water supplies so it is important to discuss this with your dentist before deciding on the appropriate toothpaste to use. As children get older encourage them to spit out the toothpaste and not swallow it.

### **Q. When should I take my child to the dentist?**

A. Take your child with you when you go to the dentist, it will get him/her used to the sounds, smells and surroundings of the surgery. If you have difficulty in getting registered at a dental practice then contact your Clinical Nurse Specialist, as the Cleft Team may be able to help you.

## **Q. Should I use sugar-free medicines?**

- A. Yes, if you need to give pain relief then use the sugar-free variety. It is also useful to remember that if your child is prescribed any medicine for any reason then always ask for the sugar-free variety.

## **Q. What if my child has a feeding tube?**

- A. All of the above will apply to your baby. Even if your child is having no oral intake the mouth still needs to be kept healthy with regular mouth care.

## **Q. What if my child has been started on a high calorie formula?**

- A. High calorie formulas do contain more sugars – giving a drink of water after the formula can help to wash it away from the teeth.

## How to contact us

If you have any questions or need any further information you may contact:

The Cleft Clinical Nurse Specialist  
Contact number: **01865 231594**



If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473** or email **PALSJR@orh.nhs.uk**

Cleft CNS/Sandip Popat/Steven Berry  
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Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust  
Oxford OX3 9DU  
[www.oxfordradcliffe.nhs.uk/patientinformation](http://www.oxfordradcliffe.nhs.uk/patientinformation)