

# CHILDREN'S DENTAL CARE

## TOOTHBRUSHING

A good home care forms the basis of the well-being of a child's teeth.

The dental plaque (mass of bacteria) on dental surfaces causes tooth decay. The dental plaque can be removed by brushing a child's teeth twice a day with a soft toothbrush or an electronic toothbrush meant for children. You can start using toothpaste after the child's first tooth has been cut.

The child needs help in tooth brushing provided by an adult until about the age of ten. Only then the child's hand motor skills have been advanced enough.

You can check the result of brushing through the plaque disclosing tablets that are available either from the pharmacy or the dental clinic.

## NOURISHMENT

All eating and drinking, except water and xylitol products, causes a dental acid attack. Teeth can withstand 5–6 acid attacks per day. That is why it is important to stick to regular mealtimes and avoid snacking.

Also, fruits contain sugar, so they should be served only with meals. All juices, light drinks and flavored mineral waters are also harmful to teeth due to their acidity.

Water is the best thirst quencher because it does not cause any dental acid attack.

## XYLITOL

A xylitol chewing gum or a pastille taken at the end of a meal stops a dental acid attack. Xylitol does not replace toothbrushing. Xylitol products do not damage dental enamel but are safe and useful for teeth. It is recommended to use full xylitol products.

## FLUORIDE

Fluoride hardens dental enamel and repairs damages that already have occurred on the enamel.

Toothpaste for children containing fluoride should be used just a tiny amount at the beginning because small children do not yet know how to spit. Teeth should be brushed twice a day. The fluoride content of a toothpaste for children under three years of age is 1000–1100 ppm (parts per million). A small rice grits-sized amount of toothpaste is to be used on each brush.

A child of three to five can use on each brush an amount of the fluoride toothpaste (for children) of the size of his/her little fingernail, with the fluoride content of 1000–1100 ppm (parts per million). Children, six years old and older, can use toothpaste with a fluoride content of 1450 ppm (parts per million). The amount of the toothpaste to be used is 0.5–2cm.

The fluoride recommendation is based on Käypä hoito, the Current Care Guidelines (2023).

**Parents have a responsibility to take care of children's dental care. Oral and dental health is a family matter. Parents can serve as a good example to children.**