

Oral Health Promotion Programme

Our oral health promotion programme aims to educate you about how to achieve and maintain good oral health.

Our advice includes:

Regular Visits to your General Dentist

It is essential that you visit your general dentist for routine assessments both during and after orthodontic treatment. This helps to reinforce the oral health message and helps to detect dental disease (tooth decay, gum disease and tooth wear) early.

Your general dentist will advise you on how often you should be seen based upon your risk of developing dental disease. For children this maybe at 3-12 monthly intervals and for adults 3-24 monthly intervals.

Diet

Sugar, in items other than fresh fruit and vegetables, is the main cause of dental decay. The frequency of sugary food and drink intake should be restricted to meal times and avoided in between meals and just before bedtime. If you have to take medicines regularly, you should opt for sugar-free options (your GP can advise you).

Frequent intake of carbonated drinks and other acidic foods/drinks (e.g citrus) should be avoided to limit tooth erosion. We advise five fresh fruit and vegetables as part of a five-a-day diet.

Fluoride

Fluoride (FI) primarily protects enamel from tooth decay by strengthening its surface. Fluoride toothpaste containing 1450 ppm of FI should be used at least twice daily in over six-year olds. Following brushing the excess toothpaste should be spat out, and the mouth should not be rinsed, to help leave a protective tooth coating.

Fluoride containing mouthwash should be used (if >8 years old) at different times to toothpaste (e.g after meals) to maximise its effects. Your dentist can also apply FI varnish onto the teeth or prescribe a extra high FI containing toothpaste (Duraphat).

Toothbrushing and Plaque Removal

The mouth, including the teeth, is populated by millions of bacteria which form a deposit termed 'plaque'. Some of these bacteria are responsible for causing tooth decay and gum disease. Plaque deposits can be easily displayed using disclosing tablets. We recommend a medium hardness toothbrush, with even length bristles, and a small head to be used to clean the teeth twice a day.

Hard brushes can damage the gums and teeth. Interdental brushes (e.g. Single tufted, spiral or TePe brushes) can be used to clean in between the teeth at least once daily. Dental floss can also be used to clean these hard to reach surfaces. Here is some advice for when cleaning:

- Clean the teeth first thing in the morning and last thing at night
- Those wearing braces should also clean the teeth following each meal
- The teeth should be cleaned whilst looking in a mirror with one hand used to retract the lips and cheeks to enable visualisation of the tooth surfaces
- All surfaces of the teeth should be cleaned (top, front, back, sides) with particular emphasis being placed on the gum margins
- Adopt a systematic approach: tooth by tooth and surface by surface. Brushing should take 4-5 minutes.
- If the gums bleed - carry on - do not stop
- Disclosing tablets can be used to display missed areas

Alcohol and Smoking

Alcohol and smoking increase the risk of oral cancer. Smoking also increases the risk of gum disease and reduces wound healing after surgery.