



Key Stage 2

# Teacher Refresher

## Information

### Oral Hygiene

Normally our first teeth come through our gums (erupt) at around 6 months of age and we will have a full set of 20 baby (primary) teeth by the time we are 2 ½ years old. At around 6 years old our first permanent molars erupt, and the front primary teeth begin to get wobbly and fall out (exfoliate) and are replaced by adult (permanent) teeth. On average by 12 years old we have lost all our baby teeth and will have a full set of 28 teeth. By 17-21 years old our wisdom teeth will usually erupt, giving the full 32 permanent teeth, which if we look after, can last for the rest of our lives.

Bacteria can grow on teeth, clumping together to form a sticky substance called dental plaque. You will see this in your own mouth as a creamy line around your teeth or sometimes feel it as a furry layer with your tongue. If plaque is not brushed away regularly or there is a high frequency of sugar in the diet, the bacteria within the plaque can lead to tooth decay (caries).

When we eat sugary foods and drinks, bacteria in the plaque can use the sugars to make acid. Over time this can dissolve the outer surface of our teeth (the enamel), As more enamel is dissolved a hole (cavity) appears. As the decay process continues, the bacteria can reach the nerve and cause toothache.

If no dental treatment is given, the tooth decay (caries) can spread and bacteria can penetrate the nerve, leading to inflammation of the bone and surrounding structures of the tooth which can result in an abscess (lump on the gum) that is filled with pus. This can be very painful and make you feel poorly. The tooth will usually need complex dental treatment or to be removed (extracted).

Dental health is extremely important; in 2018/19 31.59% of 5-year-old children in Northern Ireland had tooth decay, this is the main reason for children aged 5 to 9 being admitted to hospital. The good news is that tooth decay can be prevented by limiting the number of times we eat foods and drinks with added sugar, brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and regularly seeing the dentist to check the health of our teeth and gums.

Fluoride in toothpaste can help strengthen our teeth and slow down the decay process. The most important time to brush teeth with fluoride toothpaste is before going to bed at night. After brushing, it is important to spit out the excess toothpaste but to not rinse directly after. To make it easy to remember it is best to add tooth brushing to a twice daily hygiene routine morning and night.