



Euroopan unionin
osarahoittama

Oral health of a 1–2-year-old child and oral care at home

1–2-vuotiaan lapsen suun terveys ja suun
hoitaminen kotona



Children's oral health

Bad teeth are not inherited. A child's mouth and teeth can stay healthy by taking care of their mouth. This brochure explains how.

Tooth decay is caused by bacteria. The bacterial infection is transmitted through saliva. With these methods you can avoid the transmission of bacteria:

- Do not put the child's food in your own mouth.
- Give your child a kiss on the cheek, not on the mouth
- The child must have their own cutlery and water bottles



The bacteria start working every time you eat or drink something. Immediately after eating, the tooth is momentarily softer and can develop cavities more easily. This is called an acid attack. Water is the only drink that does not cause cavities. Teeth can withstand 5–6 meals a day.



A bacteria only cause a cavity in the tooth when you eat a lot and frequently sugary foods, and when the teeth are dirty.

Taking care of a child's mouth by brushing their teeth

A good foundation for oral self-care habits is created already in childhood. Start brushing your child's teeth as soon as the first tooth erupts. Brush in the morning and evening.

The responsibility for brushing a child's teeth lies with an adult. An adult must brush the child's teeth until the age of 12.



Choose a small, soft brush. A toothbrush is personal. It is a good idea to replace the toothbrush with a new one every 1-3 months. Use fluoride toothpaste for children, which has an age recommendation of 0-5 years. A small swipe is enough for the amount of paste.



Fluoride paste strengthens teeth and protects teeth from cavities. Fluoride can even repair early damage to the tooth. The effect of fluoride paste can be improved by not rinsing your mouth with water. You can buy toothbrushes and toothpaste at grocery stores.

Oral health and eating

Healthy food is part of oral health.

Chewable food supports the development of teeth. Healthy chewable foods include, for example, fresh vegetables, root vegetables, fruits and berries.



The calcium in dairy products is good for your teeth. Milk is a good food drink. The child needs a vitamin D (vitamin D3) supplement.

When the child is 1 year old, he does not need milk at night. If you are still breastfeeding, breast milk can be given during the day with meals. Breastfeed only at the end of a meal, because breast milk takes away the baby's appetite.

Water is the best thirst quencher. Water can also be given at night if the child wakes up thirsty. In Finland, you can drink water directly from the tap.



Don't add sugar or honey to your child's food or drinks.

It is a good idea to limit the consumption of treats only to festive moments. Biscuits, sweets and pastries contain a lot of sugar. Lemonades and juices also contain added sugar. Dried fruits and salty snacks stick to your teeth. Avoid giving these to your child.

Using xylitol

Regularly use of xylitol pastilles helps maintain good oral health.

Xylitol prevents bacteria from working. Xylitol pastilles may prevent tooth decay. In addition, xylitol keeps teeth cleaner and dirt comes off more easily when brushing your teeth.

Start using xylitol with a small amount to help your child get used to xylitol. A whole xylitol pastille can be given to a child when he or she knows how to chew it properly. Give 1–2 xylitol pastilles after each meal. At the beginning, the xylitol pastille can be crushed and given with a spoon in small crumbs.



Xylitol pastilles may be given to children in daycare and at school after meals.

Oral health and sucking habits of a child

A one-year-old child does not need milk at night. If breastfeeding continues after the child turns one year, it is important to provide the child other healthy nutrition and to brush carefully the child's teeth in the morning and evening using fluoride toothpaste.



Teach a child over 1 year old to eat on their own, with their fingers and a spoon. Feeding a child for a long time is not good for the child.

Replace the baby bottle with a regular cup at about one year of age.

The use of a sippy cup is not recommended. Teach your child to drink from a mug as soon as possible.



Children should stop using pacifiers at the age of 1.5–2 years at the latest.

The easiest age to stop using a pacifier can be around 6–8 months of age. Make sure that the child does not start sucking their thumb instead of the pacifier. You can get help and support for stopping using a pacifier from a dental clinic.



Oral health check-ups

Take your child for an oral health check-up at regular intervals. An oral health check-up provides you information about your child's oral development and oral health. During the visit, you will receive advice on how to take care of your child's mouth and you can discuss other concerns related to oral health.

It is advisable for a child to have an oral health check-up once when the child is 1–2 years old.





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Niitty 2 -project 2023-2026

Working together with immigrant
families for a better everyday life

More information about the project:
<https://projects.tuni.fi/niitty2/>

Family Info material portal:
tuni.fi/perheinfo

This guidance sheet is mainly based on the following sources of
information :

Caries (control). Current Care Guidelines. A working group appointed by
the Finnish Medical Society Duodecim and the Finnish Dental Society
Apollonia. Helsinki: Finnish Medical Society Duodecim, 2020 (retrieved
28.3.2025). Available online: www.kaypahoito.fi

Illustration: Adobe Stock on pages 3,4 and 6.

Picture on page 6 of a child drinking from a glass of water, made with
artificial intelligence(OpenAI. (2023). *ChatGPT* (GPT-4-turbo).

Other photos produced in the Niitty2 project.



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