



Euroopan unionin
osarahoittama

Children's oral health and self-care

Lapsen suun terveys ja omahoito



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 acid attack. 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. Choose a small, soft brush. Use a fluoride toothpaste intended for children.



Fluoride strengthens teeth and protects teeth from decay. Follow the age recommendations for fluoride toothpaste. For a child aged 0-5 years, choose a paste with a fluoride content of 1000-1100ppm. For a child over 6 years old, choose a paste with a fluoride content of 1450 ppm.



Paste for children under 6 years of age



Paste for children over 6 years old

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

A toothbrush is personal. Replace your child's toothbrush every 3 months. If the bristles are worn or turned to the sides, replace the brush with a new one earlier.

Take your child for an oral health check-up regularly. At the oral health check-up, you will receive information about the child's oral development and oral health.

Oral health and eating



Healthy food is part of oral health. Chewable food supports the development of teeth. Healthy snacks include 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.

A child over 1 year old does not need milk at night. Breast milk satisfies hunger. Breastfeed a child over 1 year old only after meals.



Water is the best thirst quencher. If the child wakes up thirsty at night, offer them water. In Finland, you can drink water directly from the tap.



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

Biscuits, sweets and pastries contain a lot of sugar. Lemonades and juices also contain added sugar. Dried fruits and salty snacks stick easily to teeth. Avoid giving these to children.

Using xylitol

Xylitol pastilles support oral health when used regularly.

Xylitol prevents oral bacteria from working. Therefore, 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 to get used to xylitol.

A whole xylitol pastilles can be given to a child when he or she knows how to chew it properly.

Give 1–2 xylitol pastilles after each meal.

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



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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
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Duodecim, 2020 (retrieved 28.3.2025). Available online:
www.kaypahoito.fi

Illustration: Drawing by students of Luovi Vocational College page 3.
Other photos produced in the Niitty2 project.



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