

Importance of a good oral hygiene routine for children with heart disease

East Midlands Congenital Heart Centre

Information for Parents

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How does the health of the mouth affect the heart?

The teeth and the heart share the same blood, meaning the same bacteria that can lead to cavities in teeth can travel to the heart and cause a dangerous infection called **infective endocarditis**. This is an infection of the lining of the heart.

Why are children with heart disease at risk of getting infective endocarditis?

- Young children with heart defects may develop enamel defects that can make teeth more susceptible to decay.
- Your child may be prescribed high sugar formulas or supplements which increase the risk of developing cavities in their teeth.
- Medication for heart disease can cause dry mouth which can increase the risk of cavities.
- The demands of coping with your child's condition can sometimes lead to dental hygiene being overlooked.

Who is most at risk of getting endocarditis?

People who are most at risk of endocarditis are those who have:

- a leaking or stiff heart valve.
- a heart valve replacement.
- thickening of the walls within the heart (hypertrophic cardiomyopathy).
- most types of congenital heart disease, including when the heart disease has been treated or repaired with surgery.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

How can I reduce the risk for my child?

Although it is not possible to stop all bacteria from getting into the bloodstream, there are some things you can do to reduce the risk of getting endocarditis. A good oral hygiene routine and dietary advice are key in preventing a build-up of bacteria in the mouth.

Your child should:

- have a daily oral hygiene routine which they consistently follow (see below). Keep teeth and gums clean and healthy at all times. This should start as soon as the first tooth appears.
- visit the dentist at least every **3 months** and have any treatment needed. This is especially important if any heart surgery is planned.
- drink plain milk or water between meals. Encourage regular sips of water to prevent a dry mouth.
- reduce the amount and frequency of sugary foods and drinks they have. Sugar increases the risk of cavities (if your child is prescribed dietary supplements containing sugar, follow the advice given later in this leaflet).
- do not add sugar to foods when introducing babies to solid foods (weaning).
- request sugar-free medication for you child, where this is available.
- avoid body piercings or tattoos anywhere on the body because they carry a risk of introducing infection into the bloodstream.

Have a daily oral hygiene routine for your child:

- Brush teeth **twice** a day, with a smear (0 to 3 years) or pea sized amount (3 to 6 years) of toothpaste, and spit out after brushing. Do not rinse mouth afterwards to avoid washing off fluoride from the toothpaste. Brush in the morning and last thing at night.
- **Children aged 0 to 6** should use toothpaste with 1350 - 1500 ppm fluoride, and you should brush for them or supervise them.
- **Children over 7** should brush their teeth twice a day, with supervision if needed.
- Get your child to brush their teeth in the same room every day as part of their routine. Make sure they have minimal distractions. Give extra time for this activity as you want to keep the experience as positive as possible and this may require more time in a relaxed environment.
- Make sure they spend at least 2 minutes brushing their teeth each time, and make sure they brush everywhere; top, bottom and spaces between teeth.
- Make sure your child follows their routine everyday.
- If you have concerns about any possible cavities make sure to visit your dentist.

What advice do I follow if my child is taking a prescribed high energy dietary supplement?

Your child may be or may have been prescribed high energy milk formulas or supplements to help them gain weight. Examples are Nutrini, Nutrini Energy, Nutrini Multifibre, Fortisip and Fortini. All these contain very high levels of sugar and if taken by mouth, can be very damaging to the teeth.

- These should be given at mealtimes where possible, but not last thing at night (unless you are told differently by your healthcare professional).
- It is especially important that your child follows their oral hygiene routine.
- Let your dentist know at your next visit about the dietary supplement your child is taking, and how and when they take it.
- Please also tell your child's cardiology consultant (cardiologist) the name of the dietician or doctor who has prescribed the supplement. This will help us to discuss the use of the supplement with them, if we need to.

Contact details

For any further support or advice please contact our Cardiac Nurse Specialist Team based at Leicester Royal Infirmary on 0116 258 3338.

East Midlands Congenital Heart Centre (EMCHC): 0300 303 1573



Thanks to Heart Link Children's Charity for their support.

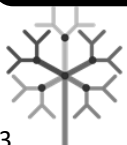
اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

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