



“The Tooth and Nothing but The Tooth”

by
Chris ‘Dr. Smile Maker’
Branfield

Keeping Your Kids Smiling for Life - Part Two

Welcome back to the “The Tooth..”. I hope you have had a good month. Last time I went on a bit about protecting your little loved ones smiles with diet and gave you some of my Top ‘Dr Smile Maker’ Tips. I hope to have a few more for you.

Tooth brushing: We all know that we should brush our teeth each day and that is no different for children. As soon as your baby’s first tooth comes through it will need to be brushed. Now I have been here and it is not always easy but it needs to be done. Getting into a routine helps.

Top tips: Try and make it as fun as possible, do it together and let your young child help you with yours or watch you do your teeth. When my kids were younger I used to ask what sound a lion or a tiger made. While the mouth was open I would get in and clean the teeth. Now I am not saying that I could get them all done in one growl but it really helped and made it more fun. Be creative. What are your kids into? Cartoons? Disney? I am no behavioural therapist but fun with children seems to work.

When can kids brush their own teeth? Good question. I was taught that

when a child had enough manual dexterity to tie their own shoe laces then they were ready. These days you might have to wait until the teenage years as we are living in the age VELCRO!

Top tip: When your children want to brush their own teeth but are too young you can brush them first and then ask them to do the important part of getting them really shiny clean. When you can see that they can do a good job then they are ready. Children are usually well into school days by this time though.

Visit your dentist and he/she will be able to tell you if a good job is being done and whether some parental help is still necessary. I see myself as a dental health personal trainer and coach and will give tips and handy hints to parents and children. Ask your dentist if you are unsure about anything.

Flouride helps to strengthen teeth and protect against decay. The action of this prevention of decay is almost like the old Lilt advert on the TV, TOTAL-LY TOPICAL. Did you see what I did there? Some younger readers will not have a clue what I am on about and I apologise.

Topical means that the action is on the surface of the tooth in the mouth and not after being swallowed. In fact, ingestion of too much fluoride can damage teeth and that is why fluoride drops are no longer used. Most tooth pastes have fluoride in and the ones for younger children have less.

Top tip: Always use a fluoride toothpaste and only put a small ‘pea sized’ amount on the brush. Tell your child NOT to swallow the tooth paste but rather just spit out the frothy stuff. The key now is NOT to rinse as this will wash away the lovely, beneficial fluoride. With really young children with very few teeth use a ‘milk teeth’ type tooth paste and put very little tooth paste on the brush as it is more difficult to stop them from swallowing.

For children who are more prone to tooth decay more topical fluoride may be required and advised by your dentist. This can either be a fluoride mouth-wash, gel, varnish or high concentration tooth paste. Another excellent invention is Tooth Mousse. This can prevent decay stop already established decay from progressing and help protect against acid erosion. My kids use it. We started when my son got some gastric reflux to help protect against the acid. Ask your dentist about it.

Sealants: Dentists, dental therapists and hygienists can place sealants on teeth. Teeth tend to be prone to decay in the fissures in the biting surface (where your cornflakes get stuck). Sometimes this decay can spread quickly and, when the fissures are deep, spread to the nerve of the tooth in no time. Sealants act to prevent or arrest decay (stop the spread of established decay).

It is a very simple procedure with no numbing and can prevent the need for fillings. These decay prone teeth need to be picked up early as sealants are generally used when there is no or very little decay. I love sealants as they are a very conservative technique and over the years I have seen outstanding success. This success is also born out in scientific studies.

Dental trauma: Children will get knocks and bumps as part of growing up and we cannot do much about that. However, when they do contact sports such as rugby, boxing or hockey (I have seen dental trauma from a hockey stick) then a sports mouth guard is recommended. While your child is growing and losing baby teeth and gaining new permanent teeth then a custom made mouth guard is probably not appropriate as it will not fit for that long. During this time you can make do with an off the shelf, good quality mouth guard. However, once your child has got most of their permanent teeth it is very sensible indeed to have a custom made mouth guard for contact sports, as they grow the possible impacts to the teeth are greater. They are more expensive but will offer most protection and are worth it. They come in almost any colour and can be made in multi colours, union jacks, stripes or harlequins.

Orthodontics: This is the moving and aligning of teeth with ‘braces’. There are all types of braces now. Some are available on the NHS some are not. Now I am no orthodontist and most dentists are not. However, we have had some training and can spot when a brace or at least some specialist advice is required. Orthodontics can be great for a child’s self confidence and can prevent the need for veneers or crowns to camouflage misaligned teeth later in life if a brace is not wanted as an adult.

Top tip: Get the most out your child’s smile. Follow some simple tips on prevention of decay and trauma and visit your dentist to sort any problems that may arise early on and work together as a team. Team work and communication is the key to success.

Again I hope you have found this helpful.

Good Luck, Chris

Chris

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