This toolkit will provide the resources you need to deliver ‘A Little Trip To The Dentist’, with this month’s materials focusing on the impact sugar can have on a baby’s emerging teeth and general health.

Developed in partnership with Public Health England, NHS England and NHS Improvement’s campaign aims to increase the number of families in the West Midlands taking their babies to a dentist before their first teeth come through.

We’re relying on your support to help us share these messages far and wide, much of which will be relevant to your staff, patients/families and other key stakeholders. We would also encourage you to share this information with other organisations or teams who may also want to get behind *A Little Trip To The Dentist*.

**Our latest theme**

June is all about sugar and the impact too much of it can have on a baby’s teeth and general wellbeing. Eating too much sugar can lead to tooth decay and unhealthy weight in children.

As babies gradually start to eat like the rest of the family it’s important that they aren’t introduced to too many ‘free sugars’. These can be found in all sorts of food and drink including puddings, buns, custards, biscuits, cereal bars, flavoured yoghurts, breakfast cereals, squash and flavoured milk. Many parents may not know that things like unsweetened fruit juices, fruit purees, smoothies, and ingredients such as fruit juice concentrate, syrups, nectars and molasses are high in free sugars.

A healthy balanced diet based on starchy foods, protein foods, vegetables, fruit, and dairy without free sugars is best for babies’ teeth. It’s a good idea to get babies used to the different textures and tastes of fruit and vegetables themselves rather than too many ready-made juices, purees or ‘fruit equivalent’ snacks which are high in sugar.

Early visits to the dentist can help families get a better understanding of the effects sugar can have, offering a valuable opportunity to get advice on reducing sugars in diets. Dentists can also give useful tips on how the way we consume food might make a difference. For example, eating dried fruit as part of a meal instead of a separate snack reduces the impact the sugar can have on teeth.

It also ensures that a dentist can spot problems before they get worse and highlight any areas in an oral health routine which could need improvements. And if no treatment is needed, it’s a great way of helping families and children feel comfortable, making future check-ups much easier.

**Statistics**

* Children are consuming on average two to three times more than the recommended amount of free sugars
* Children have already exceeded the maximum recommended sugar intake for an 18-year-old by the time they reach their tenth birthday
* On average, children consume the equivalent of around eight excess sugar cubes each day, adding up to around 2,800 excess sugar cubes per year
* Across England, only around 21% of children under two have had their teeth checked by an NHS dentist – with many areas in the West Midlands much lower
* A quarter of five-year-olds have already experienced some level of tooth decay, with an average of three or four teeth affected
* It’s estimated that around 12% of children in England may have decay in their teeth by as early as three-years-old
* A child in England has a rotten tooth removed in hospital every 10 minutes
* [A recent study by the University of Birmingham](https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/latest/2019/05/children-dentist-visit-england-low.aspx) shows that only 3% of children in England have visited the dentist before their first birthday.

**How you can help**

This toolkit provides you with all of the resources you might need to support *A Little Trip To The Dentist* in your area, including:

* Social media content for Twitter, Facebook and Instagram
* A draft media release which can be adapted and sent to local newspapers
* Draft articles for internal newsletters and external websites
* Photographs to use alongside any communications
* Posters and graphics to display in your area or on TV screens
* Links to further resources
* Contact details.

If you are from a dental practice, you can also use this toolkit to promote the availability of free NHS appointments for babies and children at your surgery.

**Social media content**

*Below you will find content for use on both Twitter and Facebook channels. Please feel free to adapt and amend as required for your audience, or simply copy and paste the below on to your pages. You may also use the following as inspiration to create your own content.*

*Note: please use photographs you have appropriate consent for, or use the images supplied alongside this toolkit.*

**Tweet pack**

Children are consuming up to 3 times the recommended daily sugar intake, and with fewer than 1 in 5 children having been to the dentist before they’re 2 #ALittleTripToTheDentist is more important than ever. Find an NHS dentist: [www.nhs.uk/service-search](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search) @NHSMidlands

Children eating too much sugar can damage teeth & cause them to become overweight, increasing their chances of getting type 2 diabetes. Families can get advice on healthier diets with #ALittleTripToTheDentist: [www.nhs.uk/service-search](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search) @NHSMidlands

**Avoid fruit juices and smoothies** before 12 months as babies don't need them. .#ALittleTripToTheDentist @NHSMidlands

When using a bottle or trainer cup, only fill it with breast milk, formula milk or water and do not add anything else to the feed. Adding other food and drink can mean added sugar which could damage a baby’s emerging teeth #ALittleTripToTheDentist @NHSMidlands

Comfort sucking from a bottle containing sweetened drinks causes tooth decay in young children. Drinks flow very slowly through a teat, which means the sugary substance will be in contact with their teeth for longer. #ALittleTripTotheDentist @NHSMidlands

Honey shouldn’t be given to babies under 1 **as not only is it bad for their teeth, but it also** contains bacteria that can lead to infant botulism, a serious illness that can make your baby very unwell. #ALittleTripToTheDentist @NHSMidlands

Squash, fizzy drinks, milkshakes and fruit juice are damaging to teeth, have very few nutrients, and can fill babies up, meaning they can miss out on other important nutrients from food. #ALittleTripToTheDentist @NHSMidlands

From 6mths, babies should be encouraged to drink from a free-flow cup to help protect their teeth as they learn to sip. It might be messy at first, but with patience your baby will soon learn and the risk of tooth decay will be reduced. #ALittleTripToTheDentist @NHSMidlands

The @BDA\_Dietitians has some great tips on sugar and how it affects our health. They’ve also highlighted some of the ways added sugars can be listed on labels – it doesn’t always say ‘sugar’! <https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/sugar> #ALittleTripToTheDentist @NHSMidlands

#ALittleTripToTheDentist regularly and even before teeth come through can be the difference between developing healthy routines and needing treatment later in life. Children are seen for free at NHS dentists – find one local to you: [www.nhs.uk/service-search](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search) @NHSMidlands

A dentist doesn’t need to look in your baby’s mouth during a check-up to make it worthwhile. #ALittleTripToTheDentist early gets them used to the environment, making later appointments go smoother. Find a local NHS dentist: [www.nhs.uk/service-search](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search) @NHSMidlands

Planning #ALittleTripToTheDentist for yourself? Why not book an appointment for your children at the same time? They go free and early visits are invaluable in helping to develop good routines. @NHSMidlands

It’s a good idea to get babies used to the tastes and textures of fruit and veg instead of ready-made juices, purees and snacks which can be very high in sugar. Get tips on safe weaning: <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/safe-weaning/> #ALittleTripToTheDentist @NHSMidlands

Babies don’t need teeth to take #ALittleTripToTheDentist. You can get useful advice on what to look out for as they develop and help build the best routines to avoid problems later in life. Find a local NHS dentist: [www.nhs.uk/service-search](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search) @NHSMidlands

**Facebook posts**

Post one

Did you know children are consuming up to three times the recommended sugar intake, with many 10 year olds having already reached the maximum suggested amount for an 18-year-old? Sugar is not only dangerous for babies and children’s developing teeth, but can have wider health implications including type 2 diabetes. Taking #ALittleTripToTheDentist with children, even before teeth come through, can help parents get useful advice on how to limit sugar and what to look out for in ready-made foods or drinks. Find a local NHS dentist: [www.nhs.uk/service-search](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search)

Post two

Your baby might not have teeth yet, but that doesn’t mean you don’t need to think about the sugar they’re consuming. Habits can start very early in life and babies tend to prefer the foods they get used to. Too much sugar risks damaging emerging teeth, becoming overweight and even getting type 2 diabetes. Lots of snacks aimed at babies and children contain sugar but you often won’t find ‘sugar’ listed on food packaging. There are plenty of other words to look out for including glucose, maltose, fructose, molasses, fruit juice concentrate and more. Take #ALittleTripToTheDentist with your baby for more advice on how to limit sugar and for tips on developing good oral health routines from the beginning. Find a local NHS dentist: [www.nhs.uk/service-search](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search)

Post three

Many drinks can be harmful to your baby’s developing teeth and general health. It’s a good idea to get babies used to the different tastes and textures of fruit and vegetables instead of too many ready-made juices, purees and snacks which can be very high in sugar. **Avoid fruit juices and smoothies** as babies don't need them. Drinks with added sugars such as squashes and fizzy drinks should never be given to a baby as not only can the sugar damage teeth and cause health issues, but they can fill your baby up meaning they can miss out on important nutrients from food. You can get more advice like this by taking #ALittleTripToTheDentist – find one local to you: [www.nhs.uk/service-search](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search)

Post four

Children should take #ALittleTripToTheDentist regularly throughout their development, but did you know visits should start even before their teeth come through? There are lots of benefits to early check-ups – not only can your dentist check everything is developing as it should be, but they can provide useful advice around developing healthy routines. Even if they don’t manage to look in your baby’s mouth, early visits get them used to the sights, smells and sounds of a practice making them feel much more comfortable in the future. Plus children are seen by NHS dentists for free – so find one near you and book an appointment: [www.nhs.uk/service-search](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search)

Post five

Every 10 minutes a child in England has a rotten tooth removed. Often the decay which results in an extraction can easily be prevented, simply by taking #ALittleTripToTheDentist early on, even before teeth come through. Dentists offer useful advice around what food or drink to avoid to help protect teeth, can help you get the most out of tooth brushing and can spot issues before they have chance to get any worse. Don’t forget, children are seen for free by NHS dentists. Find one local to you: [www.nhs.uk/service-search](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search)

**Please note – we can also supply content for other social media channels including Instagram. Please contact** [**james.tomlinson1@nhs.net**](mailto:james.tomlinson1@nhs.net) **for more information.**

**Template press release**

*You are welcome to share the campaign with local media using the following press release as a starting point. Feel free to amend according to the specific work going on in your area, or simply copy, paste and replace with your details. If you are a GP practice, you can ask for support with speaking to the media by contacting your CCG’s Communications team. Dental practices can contact* [james.tomlinson1@nhs.net](mailto:james.tomlinson1@nhs.net) *in the NHS England and NHS Improvement Communications team.*

**Too much sugar is causing early tooth decay in children**

Children across the country are consuming up to three times the recommended amount of sugar per day, with many 10 year olds having already exceeded the maximum suggested for an 18 year old.

To help address this, **[name of your organisation]** in **[local area]** is supporting NHS England and NHS Improvement’s campaign to increase the number of children in the West Midlands taking a little trip to the dentist before their teeth come through.

Early visits to the dentist can help families better understand the impact of sugar on babies’ emerging teeth. Dentists can also help to figure out where families might be able to make small changes to reduce sugars in diets and to decrease the risk of developing problems as their children grow.

**[Name of spokesperson, job title and organisation]** said:

“Sugar can be harmful to not just a child’s teeth, but their wider health too. Too much can mean they put on weight and increase their chances of developing type 2 diabetes. Simply visiting the dentist early on and using the opportunity to discuss diet and sugar intake can mean the difference between healthy teeth and requiring treatment later in life.”

Currently in the West Midlands, less than one in five children have been to the dentist by the time they turn two years old. The hope is that by raising awareness of the need for early dental visits, this number will start to increase which will mean fewer children ending up in hospital for tooth extractions.

Even if a dentist is unable to look in a baby’s mouth, getting them used to the sights, smells and sounds of a practice is invaluable in making later check-ups more comfortable.

Janet Clarke, Chair of the West Midlands Local Dental Network at NHS England and NHS Improvement - Midlands, said:

“There is a disappointing number of very young children attending the dentist right across the country and we know we still have work to do to try and address it. In the West Midlands, many parents have fed back saying they simply weren’t aware of the need to take their children until they have a full set of milk teeth, so by raising awareness, we’re hopeful we might start to see the numbers increase in our region and beyond.”

**Ends**

**Website / newsletter articles**

*The following articles have been prepared for you to share in your newsletters or on websites. One is aimed at patients and families, while the other can be shared with staff. You are welcome to add information specific to your practice or organisation.*

**Patient / family-facing article**

**Reducing sugar with a little trip to the dentist**

Your children could be consuming more sugar than you realise, putting them at risk of tooth decay, weight gain and even type 2 diabetes. Simply taking a little trip to the dentist can help you better understand what food and drink contains sugar, what alternatives are out there and how to develop and maintain the best possible oral health routines.

Across the country, children are having up to three times the recommended amount of sugar every day with many 10 year olds having already exceeded the maximum suggested amount for 18 year olds.

Only 20% of two year olds have been to the dentist and tooth extraction is one of the leading causes of hospital admission in five to 10 year olds, so it’s absolutely vital that children have check-ups regularly and from an early age – even before teeth come through.

A baby doesn’t need to teeth to have an appointment and the dentist doesn’t even have to look in their mouth. Simply going and getting the chance to experience the sights, sounds and smells of a practice is invaluable in making later check-ups more comfortable.

There’s also a host of useful tips you can get from your dentist about what food/drink is better for your baby’s teeth and what to avoid.

Children are seen for free at NHS dentists, as are new mums up to a year after birth. You can find your nearest by visiting [www.nhs.uk/service-search](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search).

**Ends**

**Internal article**

**Earlier and regular visits to the dentist can tackle excessive sugar consumption**

A campaign led by NHS England and NHS Improvement in the West Midlands is calling for more parents to start dental visits early, even before their babies have teeth. Currently only 20% of two year olds have had a check-up, but many children are consuming up to three times the recommended amount of sugar, with some 10 year olds having already exceeded the maximum suggested amount for 18 year olds.

A little trip to the dentist at a young age can help families get the advice they need to start the best possible oral health routines from the beginning. Dentists can advise on how sugar affects teeth and how to reduce it by recognising what foods and drinks are have high amounts plus what to look out for on the label.

Excessive sugar consumption can result in tooth decay, and ultimately hospitalisation to have teeth removed. Eating too much sugar can also result in a child becoming overweight and putting themselves at risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

The campaign sees dentists across the West Midlands encouraging more families of very young children to book an appointment. They don’t need teeth for a check-up and a dentist doesn’t even need to look in their mouth, as simply getting them used to the environment is great for making them feel more comfortable with regular check-ups as they get older.

Seeing an NHS dentist is free for babies and children or young people under 18, pregnant women and mums who have had a baby in the last 12 months. Families can find a local NHS practice by visiting [www.nhs.uk/service-search](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search).

**Ends**

**Accompanying resources**

*This section lists accompanying resources you should find attached to the email you received this toolkit on. If you can’t find the resource you need from the following list, please let us know by emailing* [*james.tomlinson1@nhs.net*](mailto:james.tomlinson1@nhs.net)*.*

**Posters**There are a selection of posters to choose from which you can print locally to display in your area.

**Screen graphics**We also have four unique screen graphics to be displayed on TV screens in your area. These have been created for display on wide screen displays but if you need a different size, ratio or file type, please let us know.

**Quiz**  
We have produced a quiz around sugar to be used with families either in waiting rooms or with a health professional. It is in a PDF format but it can be provided in other file types too if you need it.

**Photos & graphics**There is a large selection of photos and graphics available for you to use in accompaniment. These can be provided in JPEGs. If you’d like to see what else we have available, please get in touch.

**Briefings**We can provide briefings for senior managers explaining the background of the campaign and how it was developed. The NHS England and NHS Improvement – Midlands team is also happy to come along to team meetings to discuss how you might be able to support the campaign in your area.

**Videos**  
You can find a playlist of videos related to [A Little Trip To The Dentist here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JjZr8yzTQI8&list=PLyqFDgH7WG-cY5t9ro2RYlkoVdG29BBJC&index=1). We’re always looking for opportunities to create more like this, so do get in touch if you have any ideas or are interested in getting involved.

**Links to other resources**

*Below are a number of links to resources where you can download posters and booklets to display in your practice and give to patients.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Resource | Info | Notes |
| [NHS website – how sugar affects our health](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/how-does-sugar-in-our-diet-affect-our-health/) & [Change4Life sugar resources](https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/food-facts/sugar) | Valuable information on sugar and the impact it can have on health, including tooth decay, weight and tips to cut down. |  |
| [British Dietetic Association – sugar facts](https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/sugar) | Lots of information around sugar and how to tell if it’s in foods. |  |
| [Public Health England’s ‘Top Tips for Teeth’](https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/69-top-tips-for-teeth) | Resources to help you to communicate good oral health messages to parents in manageable chunks. | You will need to register for a Campaign Resource Centre account to download these resources. |
| [Video: Oral Health Awareness for babies](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wJ_vMydc8g) | Produced by NHS England West Midlands’ Local Dental Network, this short, cartoon video aims to highlights the benefits of good oral health and dental care from birth. | To be shared via social media or in any family facing communications. |
| [Video: How to brush your baby’s teeth (6 months to 7 years)](https://www.nhs.uk/video/pages/how-do-i-brush-my-childs-teeth.aspx) | This is a 2 minute NHS video introduced by a health visitor showing a parent brushing a baby’s teeth. |  |
| [Start4Life baby pages](https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/baby) | The Start4Life baby pages provide information about parenthood, from breastfeeding to vaccinations. |  |
| [Start4Life feeding your baby leaflet](https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/breastfeeding-resources/off-to-the-best-start/) | This leaflet helps parents understand the benefits of breastfeeding, how to do it and other useful information. | Useful to download and share with parents |
| [Video: Growing up with healthy teeth](https://www.henry.org.uk/videos/healthyteeth) | A 20 minute video from HENRY all about what we can do to help children grow up with healthy teeth. | Useful for staff training or to be shared via social media or in patient-facing communications. |
| [Healthy Start](https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/) | Parents can check if they are eligible for Healthy Start, which can provide free vouchers to spend on milk, plain fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables, and free vitamins. |  |
| [PHE: Promoting a healthier weight for children, young people and families](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/healthier-weight-promotion-consistent-messaging/promoting-a-healthier-weight-for-children-young-people-and-families-consistent-messaging) | Provides advice around consistent messaging for communicating around healthy weight for children, young people and families. Includes infographics and training tools, as well as a video around child obesity. |  |

**Awareness Days**

*If you want other reasons to talk about babies taking a little trip to the dentist below are relevant awareness days you could organise activity on.*

13 May – 13 June: National Smile Month and pharmacy campaign on 0-5s oral health  
Monday 3 to Sunday 9 June: Child Safety Week  
Sunday 16 June: Father’s Day

**Upcoming themes**

July – Weaning and teeth  
August – Healthy weight and healthy teeth  
September – Tooth brushing for the very young

**Contact details for the campaign**

James Tomlinson, Communications and Engagement Officer, [james.tomlinson1@nhs.net](mailto:james.tomlinson1@nhs.net)

NHS England – Midlands Communications team, [england.memedia@nhs.net](mailto:england.memedia@nhs.net), 0113 825 0646