

## Take good care of your teeth

- Brush the teeth every morning and evening
- Use fluoride toothpaste
- Use xylitol after every meal
- Eat healthily and avoid snacking
- Drink water if you are thirsty
- Go for a check-up at the dentist if you are invited to do so

## Contact us:

Electronic services at  
[www.ekhva.fi](http://www.ekhva.fi)

**Appointment service for oral health care,**  
**tel: +358 5 352 7059**

Mon–Fri 7 am–4 pm

Please call after 10 am if you are making an appointment  
that is not urgent.

## Sources:

Finnish Dental Association and Finnish National Institute for Health  
and Welfare

**[www.ekhva.fi](http://www.ekhva.fi)**



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# Oral care for children aged under 3 Brochure for parents

## Brushing your teeth and using fluoride

Brush your teeth twice a day, in the morning and the evening.

Parents are responsible for brushing: children need help brushing their teeth. Use a soft brush with a small head that can reach to clean the teeth at the back of the child's mouth.

You can begin using toothpaste as soon as the first tooth comes through. There is no need to rinse the toothpaste away with water. The amount of fluoride in the toothpaste is shown in the product information on the tube.

Age	Fluoride content	Amount of paste
Under 3 years	1,000–1,100 ppm	A small scraping
3–5 years	1,000–1,100 ppm	A small lump
6 years	1,450 ppm	0.5–2 cm

## Tooth decay is infectious

Parents should make sure they clean and treat their own mouths properly before a baby is born. When the parents' teeth and mouths are healthy, there is less danger of harmful bacteria infecting the child's mouth. Tooth decay, also known as dental caries, is a bacterial disease that can be caused by mutans streptococci. If the parents have large amounts of harmful bacteria in the mouth, it is easier for children to become infected via saliva contact. Children are usually infected by using a spoon or dummy (pacifier) that has been in an adult's mouth.

## Nutrition and the mouth

It is good for the mouth and teeth to eat a wide variety of food that requires chewing. Every time you eat, it causes an acid attack in the mouth, making your teeth vulnerable to decay. The teeth can withstand five or six meals per day.

Xylitol stops the acid attack, which is why it is good to use xylitol every time you eat. Poor oral hygiene and constant snacking will damage your teeth. Xylitol is not a substitute for brushing your teeth.

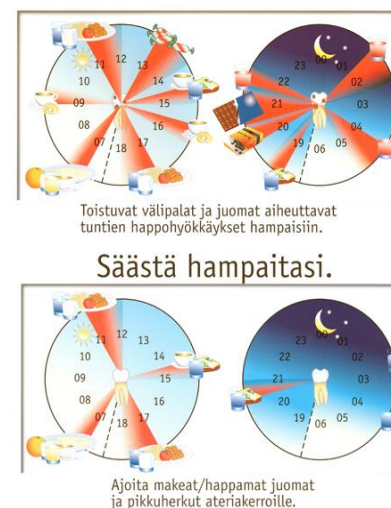
If you are thirsty, the best thing to drink between meals is water. Eat sweet foods in moderation from an early age and teach children that sweet treats should not be eaten every day. Eating sweets, biscuits, juices and sweet yogurts often is bad for oral health, and these foods should be eaten with meals and on special occasions.

## Breastfeeding routines and oral health

In Finland, breastfeeding is recommended as the only source of nutrition up to the age of 4–6 months. After this, breastfeeding is

recommended up to the age of one year alongside other nutrition.

Breastfeeding is good for the growth of the jaw, the development of the muscles around the mouth and the baby's bite. Breast milk and long-term breastfeeding alone do not cause tooth decay. When used at the same time as sugar, breast milk may cause acidic conditions to be maintained in the child's mouth, and these are favourable conditions for the bacteria that cause tooth decay. This can occur if the child is breastfed for a



long time or very frequently, particularly at night when the defence mechanisms of the saliva are at their weakest, or if the child's diet includes products containing sugar and the child's fluoride intake has not been assured.

Children have individual breastfeeding needs, and the need will become less frequent at the age of 6–9 months. Dummies (pacifiers) and baby bottles can be used less often at this stage.

The child can stop using a baby bottle at about one year of age. At this age, the child will begin getting used to the family's regular food rhythm and will stop eating and drinking at night. The child will already have teeth at this age. Milk/gruel bottles should no longer be used to get the child to sleep. Children should stop using dummies (pacifiers) before they reach the age of 2. This will prevent open bite malocclusion from developing. Sucking fingers or thumbs may also cause malocclusion. An anatomical dummy (pacifier) is a better option than a finger or thumb, and it is also easier to give up.