



Oral health

Promoting oral health within the early years is essential to protect young teeth and establish good habits for life long oral hygiene. We understand and recognise that Oral hygiene is very important in achieving overall good health.

Dental decay is a serious problem in young people – and it is largely preventable. In 2017 in England, almost a quarter of five year olds had experienced tooth decay, having an average of 3 or 4 decayed teeth. Figures suggest that more than 105 children a day have their teeth removed in hospital due to tooth decay. It is therefore important for us to support children with oral health, as their first experiences can have a great impact on the rest of their lives.

It is said that 25% of children under the age of 5 experience tooth decay and therefore oral health is a key aspect of EYFS (early years foundation stage) practice. It is essential that our staff to have a clear understanding of how to support children to maintain good oral health.

The EYFS framework states that early years providers must promote good oral health of children who attend their setting.

Oral health is important, even with baby teeth. This is because children's baby teeth:

- help them to bite and chew
- support speech and language development
- help them feel confident when they smile
- make space for and help to guide adult teeth
- Good oral health also keeps children free from toothache, infection and swollen gums.

The main themes in promoting good dental health:

- Reduce the consumption of sugary food and drink
- Limit sugary and acidic food and drinks to mealtimes
- Brush teeth at least twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste
- Visit the dentist regularly

The ways that we support good oral health at Clare House



Healthy snacks

We provide children with planned nutritional and healthy snacks. We do not provide sugary or sweet snacks at Clare House.

Lunch time

We work closely with parents and encourage families to provide healthy pack lunches (Please see health lunchboxes/snack policy)- which limits sugary snacks.

At meal times we discuss and compare different food types with children, encouraging them to identify healthy options

Drinks

We ensure that children have access to fresh drinking water all day. For those who want it we also provide children with milk at mealtimes.

Use of bottles and open cups

We ensure that only milk or water is drunk in the nursery. We are aware that prolonged use of bottles can cause tooth decay and therefore work closely with parents to ensure that children are weaned from bottles in a timely way. We support and encourage children to use open cups or free flow beakers, we work with health visitor colleagues to educate parents with regards to the use of bottles and dummies.

As an early years provider it is important to us that the activities children engage in help to further extend their development in all areas of learning. Below we have outlined how our oral health related activities benefit our children across all seven areas of learning.

- We tell stories about tooth cleaning and visits to the dentist
- We encourage role play about brushing teeth and visiting the dentist
- We enable children to play with toothbrushes and practice using them to clean teddy and dolls teeth
- We demonstrate teeth cleaning to children through story and role play
- We regularly plan activities to discuss different food types and healthy eating
- We use photographs and pictures to promote discussion about oral health and dentist visits

We regularly share information with parents and carers via social media messages, newsletters, snacks and drinks posters, with information about oral health and tips to help with teeth brushing.

References

July 2024



<https://www.dentalhealthcareeoe.nhs.uk/services/oral-health-improvement/early-years/>

<https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/safeguarding-and-welfare/oral-health>

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/send/chathealth-0-5-2/>