

Dental care for children with CHD

While good dental hygiene is important for everyone, it is especially important for children with congenital heart disease (CHD) and for preventing an infection called endocarditis.

Children with heart conditions may have weak tooth enamel – putting them at greater risk of cavities. Also, some cardiac medications may cause a child’s mouth to become dry, again increasing the risk of tooth decay.



The tooth-heart connection

It may not seem like an obvious link, but each tooth has a tiny blood vessel inside it. The same bacteria which can cause tooth decay can travel from the tooth to the heart and cause a dangerous infection called endocarditis.

What is endocarditis?

Endocarditis is a rare and potentially fatal infection of the endocardium (the inner lining of the heart). When germs enter the bloodstream and travel to the heart, endocarditis may occur. It is a rare condition, involving certain types of bacteria. If your child contracts endocarditis, they may require a long stay in hospital for treatment.

The best way to prevent this infection, is by keeping your child's teeth and gums as healthy as possible.

To find out more about endocarditis, including the symptoms, please visit the NHS website at www.nhs.uk/conditions/endocarditis

How to prevent endocarditis

Preventing cavities is the best way to protect your child from endocarditis. Here are some ways you can ensure your child has good oral hygiene:

Find a good dentist:

Your child's cardiac liaison nurse or consultant may be able to recommend a dentist who is experienced in treating children with CHD. Before your child's appointment, make sure the dentist has all the information he or she needs about your child's condition and the medication they take. Provide your dentist with the contact details of your child's medical team, so they can discuss appropriate dental treatment for your child.

Reduce the chance of tooth decay:

Reducing your child's sugar intake to help prevent decay, regular brushing and flossing are all ways you can ensure your child's teeth and gums remain healthy. The NHS has a general guide to looking after children's teeth at www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/taking-care-of-childrens-teeth but remember to discuss your specific oral hygiene routine with your dentist and child's medical team.



Tiny Tickers is here to help you and your family when you receive a diagnosis of congenital heart disease. Our website – www.tinytickers.org – has lots of information, advice and support for heart families.