

# Children's teeth in the East Midlands – root of the problem.

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Lack of NHS dentists, poor brushing habits and poor diet have all come under fire recently as we look to appoint blame for the appalling state of our children's teeth.

Research commissioned by Denplan, the UK's largest provider of private dental plans, highlights some of the areas we need to brush up on. The survey questioned parents with children under 12 across the East Midlands.

16% of parents said their children do not brush twice a day.

"Parents play a vital role when it comes to instilling thorough brushing routines that will carry on into adulthood," said Dr Henry Clover, dental advisor, Denplan.

With 100,000 fewer children visiting the dentist in 2008 than in 2006 according to NHS figures released earlier this year, brushing habits at home play an even bigger role in the early years of our children's teeth. Milk teeth are often dismissed because they 'will fall out anyway'. In fact, they should be brushed with just as much care and attention.

Survey findings show that 81% of parents in the East Midlands take an active part in helping their kids to brush, with many keeping an eye on the routine well over the recommended age.

"Parents should not underestimate their role in the supervision of the twice-daily brushing routine. The recommended age to keep a watchful eye on your children as they brush is seven." Dr Clover.

Sugar is the primary cause of tooth decay. Though this appears to be a little known fact with over half parents surveyed (54%) unaware of the main contributor to tooth decay. 15% of parents thought it was not brushing enough, and 29% thought acidic drinks like fruit juice were to blame.

"Contrary to popular belief, frequent eating of sugary food and drinks is far worse for teeth than the volume that children actually eat. If the frequency of sugar consumption is reduced throughout the day, the chances of decay starting are reduced," says Dr Clover.

On a positive note, 68% of children across the East Midlands do not have fillings, an indication of the level of understanding and importance of good oral hygiene. And although 30% of under 12s do have fillings, that is less than the national average (\*37%).

Parents can expect to pay around £3.50 a month per child with a Denplan dentist. In the long term, the benefits outweigh the costs.

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