



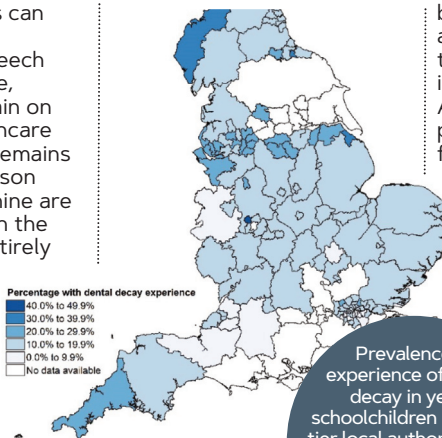
Supervised tooth brushing

By Dr Dora Jones (Right), Dentist, and Dr Charlotte Withers (Left), Dentist



Recent oral health data from 2021–2022, revealed that nearly one in three (29.3%) five-year-olds in the UK experience tooth decay, with even higher rates seen in the North West. Poor oral health can cause pain and infection, but has additional knock-on effects on children and families.

Dental problems can affect a child's confidence, speech and school attendance, placing additional strain on families and the healthcare system. Tooth decay remains the most common reason children aged five to nine are admitted to hospital in the UK, yet it is almost entirely preventable. Regular toothbrushing with fluoride toothpaste, supported by good dietary habits and regular topical fluoride applications by your dentist, provides the strongest protection. Supervised toothbrushing programmes aim to establish these essential habits early in life. In April this year, the government rolled out the National Supervised Toothbrushing Scheme to target children in the most deprived areas across the UK. Early years settings in these areas receive toothbrushes, toothpaste, and guidance so educators can supervise and support daily brushing. Staff are also encouraged to promote wider oral health education, focusing on both brushing technique and reducing the frequency of sugary snacks and drinks.



Brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste has the highest level of evidence for preventing tooth decay. Fluoride strengthens tooth enamel, making it more resistant to the acid produced when sugar and bacteria interact. Without fluoride, teeth are much more vulnerable to decay. Here in Lincolnshire, the Community Dental Service has launched 'Lincolnshire Smiles', a programme designed to improve oral health promotion and support supervised toothbrushing in more deprived areas of the county. More information can

be found at: <https://www.communitydentalservices.co.uk/oral-health-improvement/lincolnshire/>. At home, families can help prevent decay by following a few key steps:

Brush twice daily for two minutes using fluoride toothpaste remembering not to rinse after brushing, as this washes away the protective fluoride.

Limit sugary foods and drinks to mealtimes, aiming for three meals and one snack per day. Be cautious with sugar-free drinks as many are acidic and can still erode the enamel, contributing to decay and dental erosion.

By working together, at home, in schools and through community initiatives, every child will have the chance to grow up with a healthy smile!

Prevalence of experience of dental decay in year 6 schoolchildren by upper tier local authority, 2023. National Dental Epidemiology Programme (NDEP) for England.



The
Maltings
Dental Practice

Commercial Road, Grantham
01476 563181
www.maltingsdental.co.uk