

Importance of a good oral hygiene routine for children with heart disease

East Midlands Congenital Heart Centre

Last reviewed: May 2025

Information for Parents

Next review: May 2028

Leaflet number: 253 Version: 3

How does the health of the mouth affect the heart?

The teeth and the heart share the same blood. This means the same germs (bacteria) that can lead to cavities in teeth can travel to the heart. They can cause a dangerous infection called **infective endocarditis**. This is an infection of the lining of the heart.

Why are children with heart disease at risk of getting infective endocarditis?

- Young children with heart defects may have teeth with defects. These defects can make teeth more likely to decay.
- Your child may be prescribed high sugar formulas or supplements. These raise the risk of developing cavities in their teeth.
- Medication for heart disease can cause dry mouth. This can increase the risk of cavities.
- Coping with your child's condition can sometimes mean tooth brushing does not happen 2 times a day.
- Your child may be taking in more sugary food. This can raise the risk of tooth decay.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

Who is most at risk of getting endocarditis?

People who are most at risk of endocarditis are those who have:

- had endocarditis before
- a leaking or stiff heart valve.
- a heart valve replacement.
- thickening of the walls within the heart (hypertrophic cardiomyopathy).
- most types of heart disease they were born with (congenital), such as when the heart disease has been treated or repaired with surgery.

Infective endocarditis:

Patient with congenital heart disease can be at risk of infective endocarditis after dental treatment.

You should contact your cardiologist as soon as possible if you notice any of the following symptoms particularly if they happen together as a flu like illness:

- A high temperature(fever) of 38°C or above
- Sweats or chills, especially at night
- Breathlessness, especially during physical activity
- Weight loss
- Tiredness (fatigue)
- Muscle, joint or back pain (not caused by recent physical activity)

How can I reduce the risk for my child?

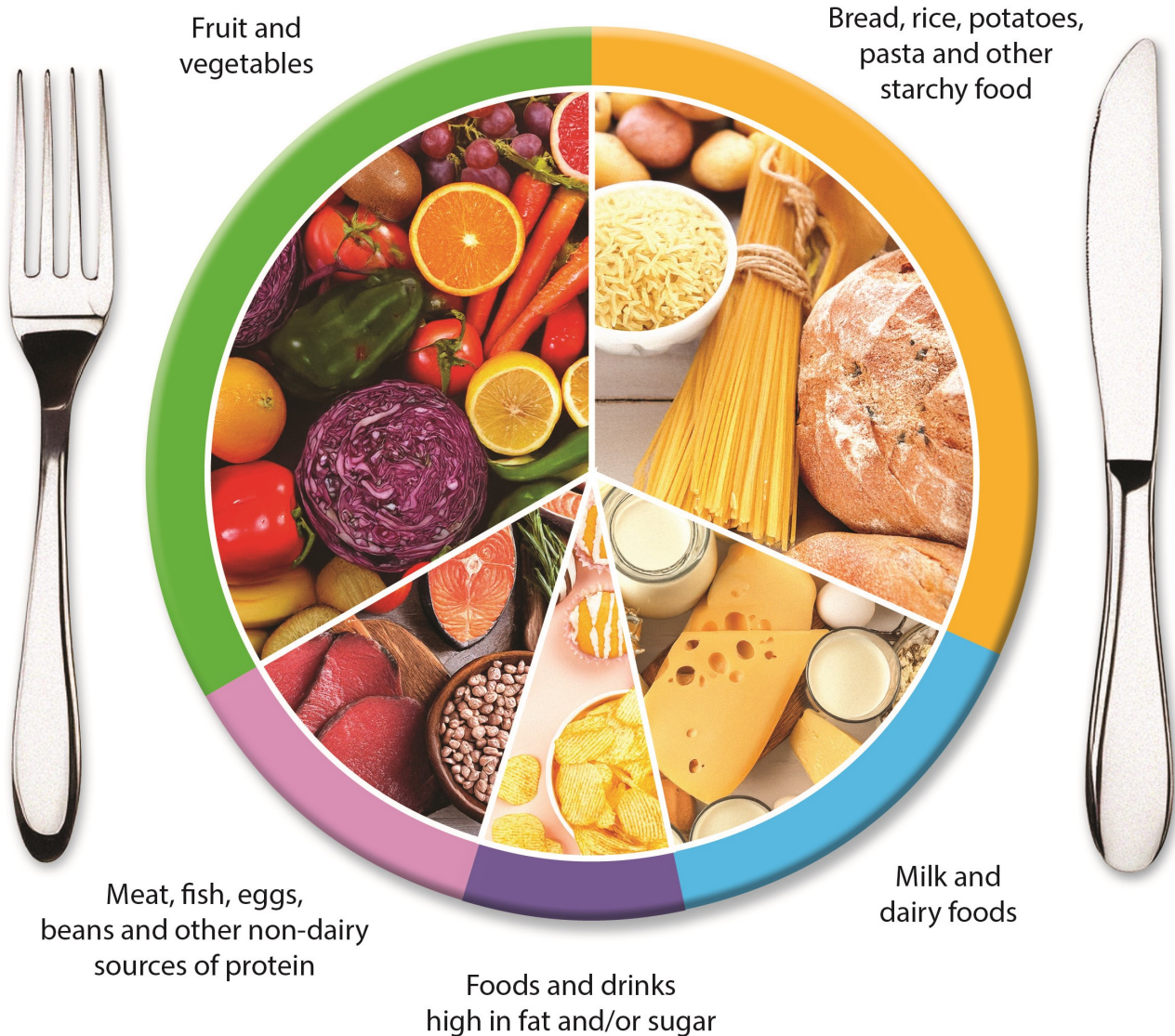
It is not possible to stop all germs from getting into the bloodstream. There are some things you can do to lower the risk of getting endocarditis. A good tooth brushing routine and **having less** sugar are key in stopping a build-up of germs in the mouth.

Your child should:

- have a daily tooth brushing routine which they consistently follow (see below).
- brush their teeth 2 times a day. This should start as soon as the first tooth appears.
- visit the dentist at least every **3 months**. Have any treatment needed. This is very important if any heart surgery is planned.
- drink plain milk or water between meals. Encourage regular sips of water to stop a dry mouth.
- reduce the amount and how often they have sugary foods and drinks. Sugar increases the risk of cavities. If your child is prescribed dietary supplements with sugar in, follow the advice given later in this leaflet.

- do not add sugar to foods when starting babies on solid foods (weaning)
- ask for sugar-free medication, where this is available.
- avoid body piercings or tattoos anywhere on the body. They carry a risk of introducing infection into the bloodstream.

The eat well plate

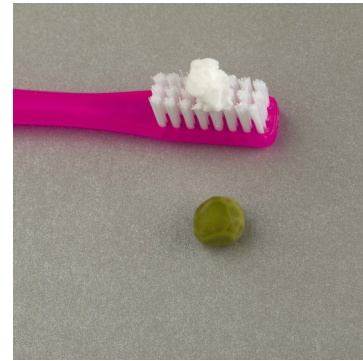


Have a daily oral hygiene routine for your child:

- Brush teeth **2 times** a day. Use a smear (0 to 3 years) or pea sized amount (3 to 6 years) of toothpaste. Spit out after brushing. Do not rinse mouth afterwards. This stops the fluoride from the toothpaste being washed away. Brush in the morning and last thing at night.



Toothbrush with smear of toothpaste



Toothbrush with pea size of toothpaste

- **Children aged 0 to 6** should use toothpaste with 1350 - 1500 ppm fluoride. You should brush for them but encourage them to brush too.
- **Children over 7** should brush their teeth 2 times a day. They may need supervision.
- Get your child to brush their teeth in the same room every day. It should be part of their routine. Make sure they have few distractions. Give extra time for it. You want to make them feel positive and relaxed about brushing their teeth.
- Make sure they spend at least 2 minutes brushing their teeth each time. Make sure they brush everywhere: top, bottom and spaces between teeth.
- Make sure your child follows their routine every day.
- Visit the dentist if you have concerns about any possible cavities

What advice do I follow if my child is taking a prescribed high energy dietary supplement?

Your child may be or may have been prescribed high energy milk formulas or supplements. These help them gain weight. Examples are Nutrini, Nutrini Energy, Nutrini Multifibre, Fortisip and Fortini. All these have very high levels of sugar. If they are taken by mouth, they can be very damaging to the teeth.

- Have them at mealtimes where possible. Do not give them last thing at night (unless you are told differently by your healthcare professional)
- It is very important that your child follows their oral hygiene routine
- Your dentist needs to know what dietary supplement your child is taking. Let them know at your next visit. They need to know how and when they take it.

- Your child's heart consultant (cardiologist) needs to know the name of the dietician or doctor who has prescribed the supplement. We can talk to them about the use of the supplement, if we need to.

Infective endocarditis:

Patients with congenital heart disease can be at greater risk of infective endocarditis after dental treatment.

You should contact your cardiologist as soon as possible if you notice any of the following symptoms, particularly if they happen together as a flu-like illness:

- A high temperature (fever) of 38°C or above
- Sweats or chills, mainly at night
- Breathlessness, mainly during physical activity
- Weight loss
- Tiredness (fatigue)
- Muscle, joint or back pain (not caused by recent physical activity)

Contact details

For any further support or advice please contact our Cardiac Nurse Specialist Team based at Leicester Royal Infirmary on 0116 258 3338.

East Midlands Congenital Heart Centre (EMCHC): 0300 303 1573

Scan the QR code to watch a video at www.emchnetwork.nhs.uk/en/page/paediatric-dental-health



اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।
Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

