

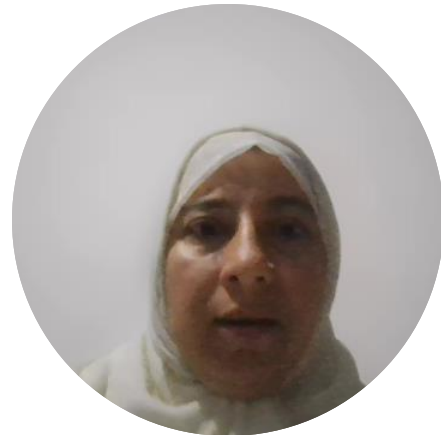
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Dental Health in Early Childhood



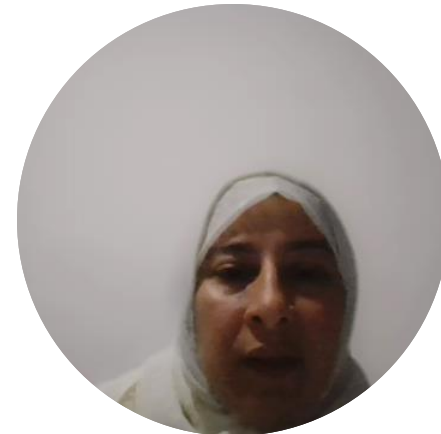
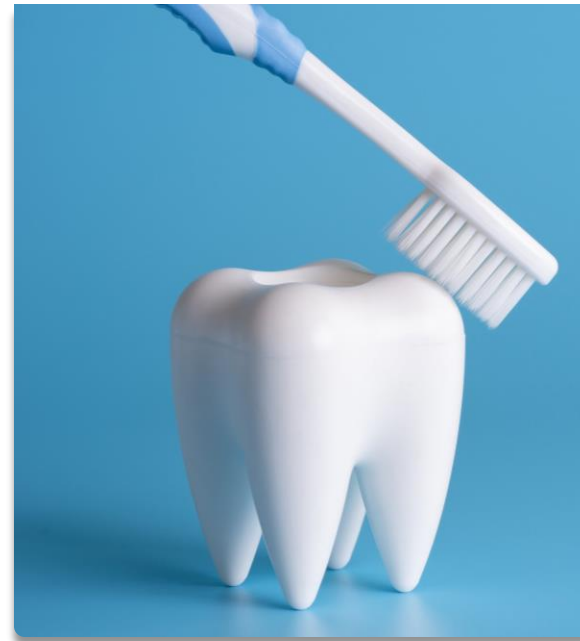
Definition

- ▶ What is dental health?
- ▶ Oral Health- mouth, teeth, gums
- ▶ Importance in Early Years



Why is it Significant?

- ❑ Common childhood issues
- ❑ Impacts learning and development
- ❑ Inequalities
- ❑ Long-term effects



Who Tells Us?

- ❑ Government guidance
- ❑ NHS advice
- ❑ Public Health evidence
- ❑ Research evidence



Department for Education (2017)
NHS (2022)
Public Health England (2017)
Public Health Wales (2025)
World Health Organization (2025)

Application: What Can We Do?

- ❑ Supervised toothbrushing
- ❑ Early Years routines
- ❑ Parental partnership
- ❑ Play-based learning
- ❑ Welsh programmes

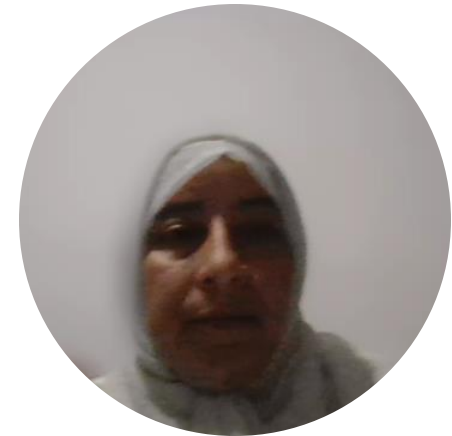


Almajed et al., (2024)
Department for Education (2023)
Department of Health and Social Care
(2025)
Naidu et al.,
Public Health England (2017)
Public Health Wales (2025a)
Public Health Wales (2025b)
The Welsh Government (2019)
World Health Organization (2025)

Conclusion

- ❑ Summary of importance
- ❑ Role of practitioners
- ❑ Prevention focus

Almajed et al(2024)
Department for Education
(2017)
Naidu et al., (2021)
NHS (2022)
World Health Organization
(2025)



Script

Slide 2 -Title Slide

Dental Health in Early Childhood

Hello everyone, Today I will be discussing dental health in early childhood and why it is a key part of children's health, development and wellbeing. I will explore what dental health is, its impact on children and the role of early years settings and wider organisations in promoting positive oral health.

Slide 3 – What is Dental Health?

Dental health, also referred to as oral health, relates to the health of teeth, gums and mouth. According to the World Health Organization (2025), oral health refers to the ability to eat, speak and socialise without pain, discomfort or disease.

Glick *et al.*, (2016) argue that oral health should be understood as part of overall health and wellbeing rather than a separate issue. This highlights that oral health is not only about teeth, but about wider physical and emotional wellbeing.

According to the NHS (2022), healthy teeth are essential in supporting children's eating, speech development and overall growth in early childhood.

Although baby teeth are temporary, they play an important role in supporting oral development of adult teeth by influencing the positioning and guiding the correct alignment of teeth later in life.

Furthermore, Public Health England (2017) states that poor dental health in young children may lead to pain, infection, difficulty sleeping and problems eating, which can negatively affect learning, concentration and overall wellbeing. Naidu *et al.*, (2021) also highlights that untreated Early Childhood Caries, often referred to as ECC, can result in serious health consequences for young children, reinforcing the importance of prevention and early intervention during the early years.

The evidence from Public Health England (2017) further demonstrates that oral health should be understood as an important part of children's overall health, rather than simply the condition of their teeth. This reinforces the view that maintaining good oral health supports children's comfort, wellbeing and everyday functioning during early childhood.

Dental health is particularly relevant within Early Years settings because practitioners have an important role in supporting healthy habits from an early age. According to the Department for Education (2023), early years settings are expected to promote oral health as part of supporting children's health, development and wellbeing. This clearly shows dental health is both a health issue and an educational responsibility within Early Years practice.

Slide 4 – Why is Dental Health Significant?

According to Public Health England (2017), tooth decay remains one of the most common health problems affecting children, despite being largely preventable. Poor oral health in early childhood can have long-term consequences that extend beyond immediate discomfort with potential implications for children's overall health, development, wellbeing and educational participation.

Public Health England (2017) also highlights that poor dental health can have wider consequences for children's development, including reduced participation in learning and everyday activities due to discomfort or treatment needs. Research by Almajed *et al.*, (2024) suggests that socioeconomic factors significantly influence children's oral health outcomes, meaning that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to experience dental problems linked to wider social determinants such as income, diet quality and poor quality of life.

Naidu *et al.*, (2021) define ECC as the presence of decayed, missing or filled tooth surfaces in children under six years old. If left untreated it can lead to infections, emergency dental treatment and wider impacts for both families and health services, demonstrating the importance of early prevention.

This demonstrates that early intervention in dental health can have long-term benefits, not only for physical health but also for reducing inequalities and improving lifelong wellbeing.

Slide 5 – Who Tells Us?

The World Health Organization (2025) recognises oral health as an essential part of overall health and wellbeing, highlighting that oral diseases are among the most common health conditions globally. The organisation also emphasises the importance of prevention and early intervention in improving children's long-term oral health outcomes.

According to the Department for Education (2023), early years settings are expected to promote oral health as part of supporting children's health, development and wellbeing, demonstrating how oral health is embedded within early education policy and practice.

The NHS (2022) play a central role in ensuring that they provide practical guidance for parents and practitioners on daily oral hygiene routines, including brushing twice daily with fluoride toothpaste and attending regular dental check-ups, supporting the development of healthy routines in early childhood.

Public Health England (2017) identifies child dental health as a significant public health issue, highlighting the importance of prevention and early intervention in reducing tooth decay and improving outcomes for young children.

In Wales, Public Health Wales (2025a) emphasises the importance of delivering oral health education within early years settings through consistent routines, practitioner guidance and family engagement, supporting national programmes aimed at improving children's dental health. Naidu *et al.*, (2021) further state that ECC is widely recognised as a major global public health issue, affecting a significant number of preschool-aged children worldwide. The authors also emphasise that children's oral health is influenced by families, communities and health services, suggesting that they are shaped by interconnected factors.

Almajed *et al.*, (2024) also highlight that socioeconomic inequalities strongly influence children's oral health outcomes, showing that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to experience poorer dental health due to wider social and environmental factors.

This is important because it shows that oral health is not only influenced by individual habits, but also by wider circumstances such as access to healthcare, income and education.

Slide 6- Application: What can we do?

According to the Department of Health and Social Care (2025), supervised toothbrushing programmes in early years settings can significantly reduce tooth decay and help children develop proper brushing habits. In practice, this may involve children brushing their teeth at set times during the day with support from practitioners, helping to establish consistent routines and positive habits from an early age.

Public Health England (2017) highlights that prevention is the most effective approach, particularly through early education and daily routines, supporting the development of positive oral habits from an early age.

According to the Department for Education (2023), early years practitioners play a key role in supporting healthy behaviours through everyday practice, which helps to embed positive oral health routines in early years settings.

This preventative approach is also supported internationally. According to the World Health Organization (2025), promoting oral health in childhood requires early prevention, education and access to supportive health systems. This reinforces the importance of introducing positive oral hygiene habits from an early age and ensuring children receive consistent support across educational, family and healthcare settings.

Public Health Wales (2025a) explains that oral health education should be embedded into early years settings through staff support, routines and engagement with families. This includes initiatives such as Designed to Smile in Wales, which aims to improve children's oral health and reduce inequalities.

Public Health Wales (2025b) also provides classroom resources such as songs, stories and activities that help children learn about dental hygiene in an engaging and age-appropriate way, making oral health education more accessible and easier for young children to understand and apply every day routines.

The Welsh Government (2019) shows how structured national programmes can support consistent toothbrushing routines across early years settings. For example, national initiatives in Wales aim to provide children with regular opportunities to brush their teeth within educational settings, helping to establish positive habits from an early age.

NHS Wales (2017) highlights the importance of parental involvement, including encouraging brushing at home and reducing sugar intake, and promoting healthy eating habits. Parental influence plays a key role in shaping children's daily routines, meaning that consistent messages between home and early years settings help reinforce positive oral health behaviours and support long-term habit formation.

Naidu *et al.*, (2021) emphasises that collaboration between practitioners, families and health services is essential for long-term improvement in oral health. Working together ensures that children receive consistent messages and support across different environments, helping to reinforce positive oral hygiene practices and improve access to preventative care and early intervention.

Almajed *et al.*, (2024) further highlight that socioeconomic inequalities significantly influence children's oral health outcomes, suggesting that early intervention, accessible education and targeted support for families are important in reducing disparities and improving children's dental health outcomes.

Overall, this shows that early years practice plays a vital role in education, prevention and supporting families in establishing positive oral health routines, contributing to improved long-term outcomes for children.

Slide 7 – Conclusion

In conclusion, dental health is a key aspect of children's overall health and development in early childhood.

According to the NHS (2022) and the World Health Organization (2025), healthy teeth support eating, speech development and confidence, while poor oral health can negatively affect wellbeing and daily life.

Public Health Wales (2025a) and the Department for Education (2023) both highlight the importance of early intervention and the role of early years settings in promoting oral health and supporting positive health behaviours.

Research by Almajed *et al.*, (2024) and Naidu *et al.*, (2021) shows that dental health is influenced by both social factors and early habits, reinforcing the importance of prevention and early support.

Overall, promoting positive dental health in early childhood requires a collaborative approach between early years settings, families, health services and wider public health initiatives, which helps to establish healthy habits and improve long-term outcomes for children.

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