COTTINGHAM DENTAL PRACTICE • NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER

PREMATURITY AWARENESS MONTH

The effects of prematurity on teeth

Supporting little smiles from the very beginning

WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT THIS?

Babies born prematurely may have a higher chance of certain dental differences. This does not mean dental problems are inevitable. Knowing what to look out for and getting the right advice early can help protect a child's oral health as they grow.

HOW CAN PREMATURITY AFFECT TEETH?

1. Enamel development

Enamel is the protective outer layer of a tooth. In some children born prematurely, it may develop differently and appear thinner, less mineralised, or have white, cream or brown patches.

2. Tooth eruption

Milk teeth may come through later than expected. Children develop at different rates, so a dentist can help assess tooth development in the context of your child's individual history.

3. Sensitivity and decay

Enamel differences can sometimes make teeth more vulnerable to wear or decay. Regular checks and daily brushing are important, especially if you notice marks, sensitivity or changes to the teeth.

HELPING LITTLE TEETH STAY HEALTHY

Brush twice every day

Use an age-appropriate toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste. For children under 3, use a smear; for ages 3–6, use a pea-sized amount. An adult should help or supervise brushing.

Choose tooth-friendly drinks and snacks

Keep sugary foods and drinks to mealtimes where possible. Water and plain milk are the best choices between meals.

Visit the dentist early

Arrange a dental visit when the first tooth appears or by your child's first birthday. Tell the dental team if your child was born prematurely so advice can be tailored to them.

Ask about extra prevention

Your dentist may recommend personalised advice, fluoride varnish or more frequent reviews depending on your child's needs.

WAS YOUR CHILD BORN PREMATURELY?

Please let us know at your next appointment. We can check their teeth, discuss any concerns and help you build a prevention plan that works for your family.

WHEN SHOULD YOU ASK FOR ADVICE?

Book an appointment if you notice unusual marks, tooth sensitivity, signs of decay or concerns about teeth coming through. You do not need to wait until your next routine check-up.

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Waiting on that first baby tooth?

For premature babies, the dental calendar works a little differently.

Teething in preterm infants is typically delayed compared to full-term babies, often emerging around 8 to 9 months instead of the typical 6 months.

However, researchers have found that preemies almost always erupt their teeth right on schedule if you calculate using their **"corrected age"**

Every child is different. This newsletter is general information and does not replace individual dental advice.