



# Health & oral health policy

Written in accordance with the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2024):  
Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements: Health, medicines, food and drink,

**3.58** Providers must promote the good health, including the oral health, of the children they look after.

## Oral health

At Little Squirrels we understand the importance of good oral health and sharing our knowledge with children and their parents.

Oral health is important, even with baby teeth. This is because children's baby teeth:

- ♥ help them to bite and chew
- ♥ support speech and language development
- ♥ help them feel confident when they smile
- ♥ make space for and help to guide adult teeth

Good oral health also keeps children free from toothache, infection and swollen gums.

## **Tooth decay**

Children need to form good oral health habits from an early age to help avoid tooth decay. Tooth decay happens when sugars from food and drinks interact with bacteria in tooth plaque. This results in acid production, causing holes in teeth known as cavities.

If children have tooth decay, they may have yellow, brown or black marks on their teeth. They may also complain about their teeth hurting, particularly when eating or drinking.

Tooth decay is largely preventable, but it is still a serious problem among young children. The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities oral health survey of 5 year old children 2022 and Public Health England oral health survey of 3 year old children 2020 found that:

- ♥ nearly a quarter of 5 year olds in England have tooth decay, affecting 3 to 4 teeth on average
- ♥ children from more deprived backgrounds are more likely to have tooth decay
- ♥ 11% of 3 year olds in England have visible tooth decay, affecting 3 teeth on average

Having decayed teeth removed is also the most common reason for surgery under a general anaesthetic for children aged 6 to 10.

## **How we promote good oral health at Little Squirrels**

Oral health is linked to, self-care, healthy eating, and physical development.

### **Dentist role play**

We have dentist role play in every room, including a set of teeth, tooth brushes, books and mirrors.

### **Practise tooth brushing on dolls and toys**

You can show children how to do this yourself first to model effective tooth brushing.

### **Brush model teeth**

Use a set of model teeth or a laminated picture, and add playdough, marker pen or tissue paper to represent tooth plaque. Encourage the children to use a toothbrush to remove the 'plaque'.

### **Stories and discussion**

You can read stories with children about teeth and smiles. These can cover important topics like visiting the dentist and brushing teeth. You should also discuss the foods and drinks that do and do not help to grow healthy, strong teeth with children.

Talking tubs are a good way to promote conversations with children. Place items related to oral health in a tub, then get children to explore and talk about them with you.

You can add things like:

- toothbrushes
- pictures of dentists
- false or model teeth
- a selection of foods and drinks

[Find a dentist - NHS](#)

Policy updated by Kylie Jones and the Little Squirrels team **May 2026**.