

FACTSHEET



This fact sheet is for education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professionals to make sure this information is right for your child. If you would like to provide feedback on this fact sheet, please visit: www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/fact-sheets/feedback-form.

Oral health and medications for children with a heart condition

A good oral health routine is important for people of all ages, but especially during childhood. If you would like further information on oral health and your child's heart condition please read the "Oral Health for Children with a Heart Condition" factsheet.

How do medications affect oral health?

Children who have a heart condition often need to take medications for a long period of time. There is some evidence that some medications taken over a long period of time in childhood can be damaging to oral health. This is because children's medications often have very high amounts of sugar in them to make them taste better. **It is important to continue to give your child all their prescribed medications**, however it is also important for you to take extra care of your child's teeth.

Most medications do not cause immediate damage to your child's teeth – so short term use is not usually a worry.

Tooth decay happens more quickly in the presence of sugar. The sugar becomes acidic due to the normal oral bacteria in the mouth. This acid, as well as the acids contained in some heart medications breakdown the enamel, forming a cavity in the tooth. Many medications contain sugar to make them taste good for children; this sugar results in the buildup of a sticky film called dental plaque which causes tooth decay and bleeding gums.

Some medications that may be of concern include; aspirin, captopril, propranolol, digoxin, liquid iron supplementation, prednisolone, paracetamol, ibuprofen and some oral antibiotics.

Speak to your pharmacist, dentist, or doctor if you have questions or concerns about any of the medications you are giving your child.

What can I do to prevent tooth decay due to medications?

The best way to prevent tooth decay for your child is to rinse their mouth with water after a dose of medication. If your child is too young to rinse their mouth you can gently wipe their teeth and mouth with a damp cloth. Where possible give your child their medications before or during a meal as this will encourage saliva production and reduce the amount of time medication is left in contact with their teeth.

It's worthwhile asking your dentist if any of your child's medical conditions or medications might increase the chance of tooth or gum disease, as they can provide the best advice on how to manage this. Your dentist will be able to give you specific advice.

Tell your dentist if your child is taking any medications

Some medications can affect dental treatment, so it's important that you tell your dentist what medications your child is taking **before** beginning any procedures. The most common medications of concern in children with a heart condition are aspirin and warfarin. These medications can increase the amount of bleeding during dental procedures. Your cardiologist and dentist will work together to find the safest way to manage this before any procedures.