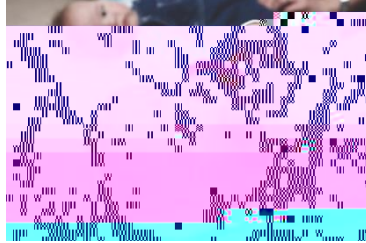Bacteria and food can cause tooth decay. A clear, sticky substance called plaque is always forming on your teeth and gums. Plaque contains bacteria that feed on the sugars in the food you eat, as the bacteria feed they make acids that can wear away the tooth enamel and cause holes (cavities) in the teeth.

Eat sugary foods and drinks less frequently, particularly if breastfeeding beyond the age of 2 years.

Brush teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste, especially just before bed.

Introduce an open top or free-flow cup from six months.

Be careful about oral hygiene (eg not sharing food, toothbrushes or cutlery).

If your baby/child uses a dummy, avoid cleaning or moistening it with your mouth, as bacteria from your mouth will end up in the baby/child's mouth.

Unfortunately some medicines contain sugar, which can cause tooth decay if given frequently for long periods of time.

Check with your doctor or pharmacist to see if a sugar-free alternative is available.

If possible, give medicines at mealtimes and **not** last thing at night.

It is important for you and your baby (before the age of one) to visit your dentist at least once a year. The dentist will check your teeth and gums to make sure they are healthy.

To find a local NHS dentist, call 03330 063 300 or 01392 822348, or email accessdentalhelpline@nhs.net