

'Baby teeth DO matter' – Vaughan Gething

The Welsh Government's 'Baby Teeth DO Matter' campaign was launched to raise the awareness of the importance of adopting healthy dental habits early to prevent tooth decay.

The message to parents is:

- Children should start having their teeth brushed as soon as the first teeth come through at 6 months
- Brush teeth last thing at night before going to bed and one other time during the day
- Use a smear of family fluoride toothpaste
- Take children to the dentist before the age of one and the whole family should be having routine dental check ups
- Reduce the amount and frequency of sugary foods and drinks in diet from the weaning stage.

Speaking after the visit Vaughan Gething said:

"While we've seen improvements in oral health in Wales, 35% of young children are still affected by tooth decay by age 5. This number is much higher in Merthyr Tydfil where I am visiting today.

"Dental decay is preventable and this needs to improve. Our Designed to Smile programme is making a real impact in improving the oral health of children across Wales. It has recently been revamped as we know it is what is happening every day at home that really matters. It now includes more help for dental practice teams to get involved with babies, very young children and their parents to ensure the positive progress made so far continues.

"Small changes will make a big difference for our young people's oral health. Let's look after their teeth and make sure they have got something to smile about in the future."

Chief Dental Officer Dr Colette Bridgman said:

"Baby teeth are very important to a child's health and development.

"Having decayed teeth can affect children's ability to eat, sleep, can lead to pain and infection and being admitted to hospital for general anaesthetic. Dental decay is preventable.

"Looking after teeth needs to start as soon as they appear in a

baby's mouth. Many people think that baby teeth don't matter because the teeth will fall out anyway and be replaced with a second set.

"They do matter, when baby teeth are lost too early, apart from the pain and suffering caused for the child the space available for the second teeth can be reduced. This can make permanent teeth crooked or crowded.

"Dental practice teams can advise on how to look after your child's teeth. They can offer early care and advise to help keep teeth healthy and they are encouraging and want all parents of very young children to get checked that is why this campaign is so very important."