



- Between 2011/12 and 2018/19, the rate of children aged 0 to 5 years who have had tooth extractions due to decay has fallen from 3.5 to 2.8 per 1,000 children in England.<sup>1</sup>
- Tooth decay has been the most common reason for hospital admission among children aged five to nine for the past three years.<sup>2</sup> For young children, tooth extractions usually require a general anaesthetic and an admission to hospital. This is associated with increased morbidity, and places financial burden on the NHS.<sup>3</sup>
- Between 2008 and 2017, prevalence of visible decay fell from 30.9% to 23.3%.<sup>4</sup>
- Children from lower socioeconomic groups have a greater prevalence and severity of tooth decay. In England, while 77% of 5 year old children were free of visually obvious tooth decay in 2017, there are significant regional inequalities, with children from the most deprived areas having more than twice the level of decay compared with those from the least deprived.<sup>5</sup>

## Calls to Government

- UK Government should commission a review into the factors affecting access to primary, secondary and emergency dental care, with a view to addressing inequalities in England.
- Public Health England should deliver a public health messaging campaign on children's oral health. The campaign should raise awareness of factors contributing to poor oral health (i.e. diet / tooth brushing) and how to access services in a timely manner (i.e. Dental Check by One).
- UK Government should provide preventative support programmes for children and families to enable them take up positive oral health habits (i.e. through supervised tooth

<sup>1</sup> NHS Digital, *Tooth extractions due to decay for children admitted as inpatients to hospital aged 10 years and under*, 2020, available: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-dental-statistics/2019-20-biannual-report>

brushing schemes). The programme should be targeted at children aged 0-7 in England and should draw on comparable schemes in Wales (Designed to Smile), Scotland (Child Smile) and Northern Ireland (Happy Smiles).

- UK Government should provide resource and support for Local Authorities to implement fluoridation of public water supplies, particularly for areas where there is a high prevalence of tooth decay.

## About RCPCH

The [Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health \(RCPCH\)](#) is the membership body for paediatricians, representing more than 19,500 child health professionals in the UK and abroad. We are responsible for the training, examinations and professional standards of paediatricians across the country, and we use our research and experience to develop recommendations to promote better child health outcomes.

Our mission is to transform child health through knowledge, innovation and expertise and to ensure that children are at the heart of the health service.

RCPCH is carefully monitoring the risks and impacts of COVID-19 on our members and the wider child health workforce, and on children and young people. We have produced guidance for our members on [paediatric services](#), [staffing and rotas](#), and [education and training](#). We have also produced [advice for parents](#). We are currently collecting data on the [impact of COVID-19 on child health services](#), to assist future planning of services.

For further information please contact:

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