

Oral Health - How do you look after your teeth? A Snapshot Survey of Children and Young People in Wales



Children's Commissioner for Wales



**Comisiynydd
Plant Cymru**
Children's
Commissioner
for Wales

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Introduction

During April 2025 we asked children and young people about oral health and how they looked after their teeth.

The survey was part of an ongoing series of topical questions we ask children and young people monthly to hear their views on a variety of issues, called Monthly Matters. It was shared directly with all schools signed up to our children's rights schemes for primary and secondary schools, as well as community groups.

As part of the survey pack, children and young people were shown a video introducing the topic, and they were asked to consider some questions, like since the start of the school year - have they seen a dentist and what foods and drinks should they be more careful with when it comes to their teeth. We suggested in our session outline that, following this video, children and young people should have a few minutes to discuss their views with each other before answering the survey. Schools and groups had two options for completing the survey; children and young people could either do it independently, or a teacher or group leader could complete the survey on behalf of the group by answering a different set of questions to give an overview of the discussion.

734 children and young people answered the survey individually. A further 198 children took part in groups, with teachers and youth workers submitting a summary of their views. A broad range of ages took part, from children the age of 4 up to 18-year-olds. We received responses from 19 local authority areas.

Questions were developed by the Commissioner's team with advice from Public Health Wales.

Questions for children and young people

Have you been to the dentist since you started your school year?

Yes (323) - 66%

No (94) - 19%

I don't know (71) - 15%

How often do you usually brush your teeth?

Twice a day (347) - 71%

Once a day (66) - 13%

Three times a day (42) - 9%

More than three times a day (20) - 4%

Less than once day (13) - 3%

Never (3) - 1%

When do you clean your teeth? (tick as many as you want)

Just before I go to bed/sleep (367) - 75%

After breakfast (324) - 66%

Before breakfast (161) - 33%

After evening meal (68) - 14%

Other (27) - 6%

Before evening meal (17) - 4%

What do you do after you've finished brushing your teeth?

Leave the toothpaste on your teeth (233) - 51%

Rinse your mouth out with water (226) - 49%

Fruit (fresh/tinned/dried/frozen)

Four or more times a day (141) - 29%

Two times a day (124) - 25%

Once a day (91) - 19%

Three times a day (80) - 16%

Rarely or never (29) - 6%

Less than once a day (27) - 6%

Cakes or biscuits

Once a day (147) - 30%

Less than once a day (117) - 24%

Two times a day (93) - 19%

Rarely or never (75) - 15%

Three times a day (28) - 6%

Four or more times a day (26) - 5%

Sweets (candy or chocolate)

Once a day (166) - 34%

Two times a day (101) - 21%

Less than once a day (100) - 20%

Three times a day (54) - 11%

Rarely or never (35) - 7%

Four or more times a day (34) - 7%

Diet coke or other non-sugar drinks

Rarely or never (143) - 29%

Once a day (110) - 23%

Less than once a day (105) - 22%

Two times a day (67) - 14%

Four or more times a day (36) - 7%

Three times a day (26) - 5%

Coke or other soft drinks or squash that contain sugar

Once a day (126) - 26%
Rarely or never (118) - 25%
Less than once a day (87) - 18%
Two times a day (78) - 16%
Four or more times a day (40) - 8%
Three times a day (33) - 7%

Energy (sports) drinks (e.g. Lucozade)

Rarely or never (287) - 59%
Less than once a day (84) - 17%
Once a day (64) - 13%
Two times a day (26) - 5%
Four or more times a day (15) - 3%
Three times a day (12) - 3%

Water (tap or bottled)

Four or more times a day (237) - 49%
Three times a day (85) - 17%
Two times a day (75) - 15%
Once a day (47) - 10%
Rarely or never (25) - 5%
Less than once a day (20) - 4%

Fruit juice and smoothies

Rarely or never (124) - 26%
Once a day (114) - 23%
Less than once a day (101) - 21%
Two times a day (78) - 16%
Four or more times a day (39) - 8%
Three times a day (31) - 6%

Do you ever have drinks or food in the evening after you have brushed your teeth?

No (233) - 48%

Sometimes (149) - 31%

Yes (73) - 15%

I don't know (34) - 7%

Conclusion

Access to dentists

- Two-thirds (66%) of children taking our survey said they had seen a dentist since the start of the school year. [The latest published Welsh Government statistics](#) show that 45.8% of children were treated by NHS dentists in the year before March 2024.

Oral health habits

- 80% of children taking part in our survey brush their teeth at least twice a day, although 13% said they only brush their teeth once a day.
- Almost half (49%) said they rinse their mouth with water after brushing, despite not rinsing being [a key oral health message from Public Health Wales](#)
- Whilst a high number of children said they brush their teeth twice a day, the results of our snapshot survey suggest that continued messaging around healthy oral health habits are important for children and families.

We have shared the findings with the Welsh Government so they can consider them as part of their consultation on a [Reform of NHS general dental services](#).

We have also shared the findings with Public Health Wales.