



## Spoil the kids at mealtimes!

### Did you know?

- Approximately 80 million chocolate eggs were sold in the UK in 2007.
- Easter chocolate sales make up 10% of Britain's annual spending on chocolate.
- £336million was spent on Easter eggs in 2007.

### Don't let Easter ruin your teeth

Easter has always been a time to celebrate with family and friends. Originally involving the trading of eggs painted in bright colours, this tradition has evolved into a chance to gorge on something less healthy - the chocolate Easter egg.

While it's an exciting time for children, Easter egg hunts and their sugary prizes can spell disaster for their teeth. So, how can you make sure you protect your child's teeth without ruining their fun?

Dr Henry Clover, Senior Dental Advisor at Denplan, the UK's leading dental plan provider, has teamed up with specialist children's nutritionist and paediatric dietician Judy More ([www.child-nutrition.co.uk](http://www.child-nutrition.co.uk)), to create some helpful tips on ensuring your kid's teeth remain in great shape over the Easter period - no matter how many chocolate eggs they munch their way through!

### Spoil the kids at mealtimes to stop the rot

According to Dr Clover, children can still enjoy the abundance of Easter confectionery without running the risk of damaging their smiles. The trick is to encourage them to eat sweets at the end of a meal, rather than constantly nibbling throughout the day:

“Contrary to popular belief, frequent eating of sugary food and drinks is far worse for the teeth than the volume that children actually eat. After eating sugar, teeth are under acid attack for up to an hour, so if you can reduce the amount of time your child eats sugar throughout the day, you also limit the amount of time that their teeth are susceptible. This is really important over Easter when children eat more sugary foods than normal.”

Judy More agrees and adds: “A good tip to help manage sweets and chocolates is to put them in a special box or tin and allow your children to choose some to eat at the end of a meal.

“During Easter, introduce sweets at mealtimes only, with perhaps one additional snack. Your child’s teeth will be able to withstand those four attacks of sugar and acid and after cleaning their teeth before bed you can also go to sleep with a clear conscience!”

### **Be aware of danger factors**

As children naturally prefer sweet food, the challenge for parents is to balance giving them the food they love while at the same time looking out for their teeth and gums.

But Judy More reminds parents that there is no shame in letting the kids have a little of what they fancy at Easter, as long as they remember that: “Parents simply need to be aware of the ‘danger’ factors for teeth - sugar and acid. Knowing how to combat them means that foods containing sugar do not need to be avoided altogether.”

### **Don’t let kids rush the brush**

Dr Clover suggests using the Easter school holidays as a good time to brush-up on children’s teeth care habits: “School holidays give parents a bit more time-out to check that children are brushing their teeth properly. Dentists recommend children brush teeth for two minutes both in the morning and at night.

“I’d also recommend that you encourage your children to spit rather than rinse. Rinsing after brushing reduces the effectiveness of fluoride toothpaste so, don’t rinse it all away.

“Another fun way of getting children to brush their teeth properly is to give them plaque disclosing tablets, which turn the mouth dark blue in areas where there’s plaque left and show you where to brush more. These are available from chemists, and are only about £1.60 for a packet.”

### **Easter treats don’t have to be sweet**

There are also some great teeth related gadgets available for children, so why not give them a healthy gift alongside the traditional Easter egg? Presents to try are fun Tooth Timers that come in various shapes from Ballerinas to Rockets, priced at around £10.99. Flavoured toothpastes are popular and come in various flavours such as strawberry, bubblegum and watermelon. Most major toothpaste brands also produce specific children’s toothpaste.