

# Our guide to a teeth-friendly Easter

ELMSLEIGH HOUSE

— DENTAL CLINIC —





Although Easter is traditionally a Christian festival, Easter is also a time to relax, enjoy the beauty of spring, and indulge in the chocolate treats that line our supermarket aisles. But, with the increased sugar consumption comes increased risk and damage to our oral health.

By following this guide, you can help protect your and your family's oral health this Easter.

## But before we get there, here are some little known facts about the Easter celebration:

- The word Easter is derived from its origin, Eostre, an Anglo-Saxon goddess of light and the dawn, who was honoured at pagan festivals celebrating the arrival of spring.
- The custom of giving eggs at Easter has been traced back to Egyptians, Persians, Gauls, Greeks and Romans, for whom the egg was a symbol of life.
- In medieval times, a festival of egg throwing was held in the church, where the priest would throw a hard-boiled egg to one of the choirboys, who would then throw it to another, and the one holding the egg when the clock struck 12 could keep it.
- The UK's first chocolate egg was produced in 1873 by Fry's of Bristol.





## The impact of Easter chocolate on oral health

Across the UK, children (and adults) lay victim to their sweet tooth at this time of year. The abundance of chocolate products advertised and displayed on supermarket shelves can make it incredibly difficult not to indulge.

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However, we are seeing shocking statistics emerge about the state of our children's teeth:

- One in eight three-year olds already show signs of tooth decay (British Society of Paediatric Dentistry, 2018)
- One in four five-year olds have tooth decay with an average of three or four teeth affected (Public Health England 2018)
- Tooth extraction is the most common reason for hospital admissions in five to nine year olds, with around 141 children a day having one or more teeth removed – that's one every 10 minutes! (Public Health England 2018)
- The cost to the NHS of removing severely decayed teeth in under-18s has escalated over the past five years, from £27.3m to £36.2m (Oral Health Foundation, 2019).

Additionally, adult statistics are not much better, with 74% of adults in the UK having had a tooth removed, equating to more than 60 million people (Oral Health Foundation, 2019).



## Putting this into context, here are some figures about our chocolate consumption:

- In Britain, we eat an estimated 660,900 tonnes of chocolate a year, which is an average of 11kg per person per year, or three bars a week.
- Every year more than 80 million boxed chocolate Easter eggs are sold, which doesn't include all the smaller temptations such as Mini-Eggs and Crème Eggs.
- Every child in the UK will eat an average of eight Easter eggs – twice their recommended calorie intake for a whole week.
- Sales at Easter time make up 10% of UK chocolate spending for the whole year, with spending expected to increase this year.





So, here are our tips on how to be healthier this Easter

## 1. Eat your Easter eggs at meal times only

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It is not always the quantity of chocolate consumed, it's when it's consumed. Allowing children to snack on chocolate throughout the Easter weekend puts their teeth under constant attack by acid-producing bacteria, increasing the risk of cavities and tooth decay.

This is why we recommend limiting the amount of chocolate your child consumes and only allowing them to indulge at meals times. If possible, substitute milk chocolates with high cocoa content (over 75%) chocolates as they have shown to promote some oral health benefits.

Eating cheese after chocolate can help neutralise plaque acid, helping to prevent tooth decay; snacking on celery, carrots or apples can help dislodge chocolate from teeth, minimising the contact time of plaque acid with tooth enamel.





## 2. Nurture, not nature - reduce sugar

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No child is born with a 'sweet tooth' – they only develop cravings for sugary food from eating them.

Look out for sugar-free and low-sugar chocolate replacements. If an ingredient ends in “-ose” it means it’s a sugar.

The shops are full of little Easter bunny chocolates and fluffy chick toys, which are fun alternatives to eating lots of Easter eggs.

Planning an Easter trail, maybe with a picnic if the weather permits, is a fun, family bonding activity that promotes an active lifestyle and distracts from the chocolate.





### 3. Drink plenty of water

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We should all drink plenty of water, but it is especially important over the Easter holiday.

Besides from water keeping your body hydrated and your mouth healthy, drinking water after each meal or snack helps wash away food particles from your teeth and prevents dry mouth and bacterial growth that leads to tooth decay.

Fluoridated tap water additionally strengthens teeth enamel and helps prevent cavities.

## 4. Don't make chocolate a habit

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Don't encourage good behaviour by using sugary foods as a reward, it only promotes bad oral health.

There are many healthy and nutritious alternatives to chocolates and sweets available at the supermarkets, as well as a range of sugar-free alternatives that contain xylitol, which may help reduce tooth decay.

A diet balanced in vitamins, minerals, fresh fruit and vegetables is good for your overall health as well as helping to prevent tooth decay and gum disease.

If children are taught good habits from a young age, like eating a healthy diet and brushing their teeth well, it's much easier for them to continue doing this throughout their teenage years and into adulthood.







## 5. Always brush thoroughly

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It is easy to forget teeth brushing during the excitement the Easter weekend brings, but it is even more important for you and your family to brush thoroughly after chocolate treats.

Always brush your teeth at least twice a day, after breakfast and before bedtime, for a minimum of two minutes using toothpaste that contains at least 1450ppm fluoride, as this helps protect teeth from cavities.

For better oral hygiene, use interdental brushes or dental floss to remove sticky plaque from in between teeth.

Children should be supervised to ensure they brush their teeth properly and must spit out, not rinse, the toothpaste to avoid washing the protective fluoride away.

# How we can help

At Elmsleigh House, our Farnham Dentists are committed to ensuring the oral health of every single patient, of all ages, from the most confident to the most nervous.

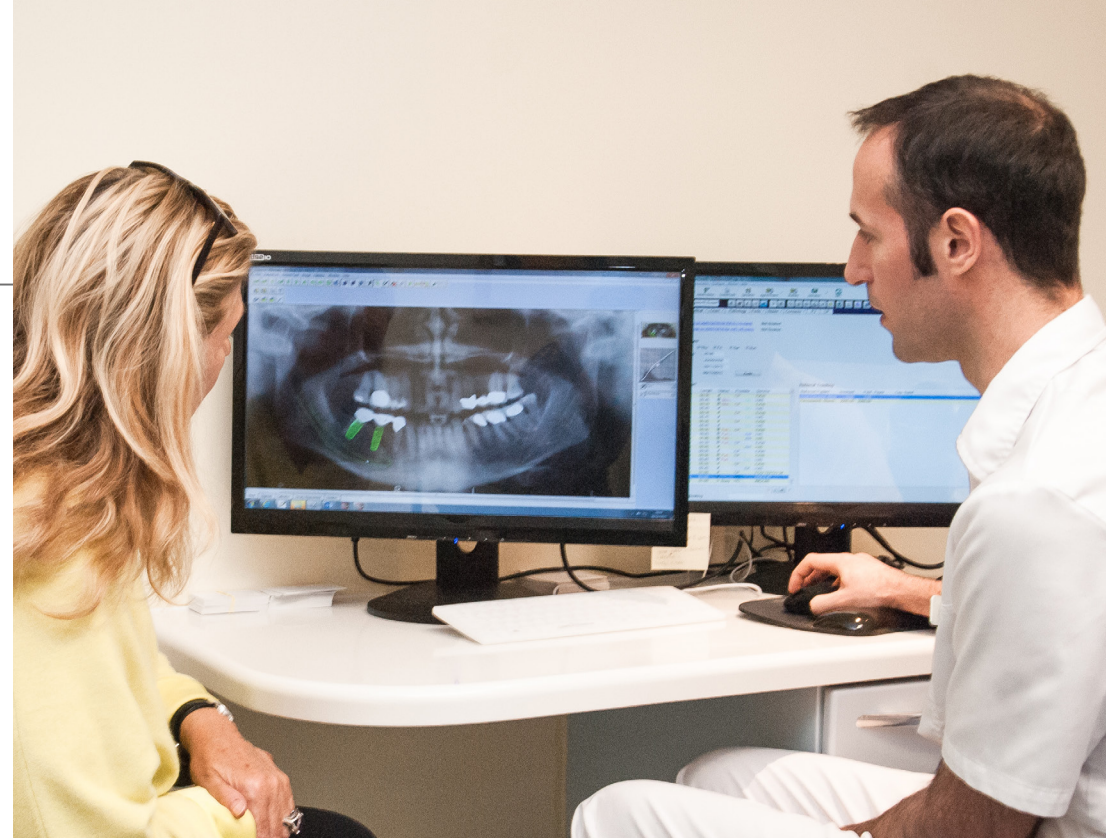
We care about educating about oral health and hygiene, as much as we do about providing the highest quality in dental care and treatments:



**Click** to watch our hygienist Gill show how best to clean your teeth.



**Click** to watch Gill also show you how to clean effectively around braces.



To book a new patient examination, your regular checkup or a hygienist appointment, call

**01252 713797**

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