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## Keep tooth decay at bay with free dental clinics for kids

Families are being reminded to maintain good oral health this Easter holiday period by setting limits on sugary treats and taking advantage of the free oral health services being run for children by South Western Sydney Local Health District.

While chocolate Easter egg hunts and sugary treats can be fun and tempting for children, Dr Ravi Srinivas, Transition Director of Oral Health Services said increased amounts of sugary treats can lead to higher risks of painful dental decay.

“Dental diseases are largely preventable, but unfortunately many people don’t realise they are suffering from symptoms of dental decay until it’s too late,” Dr Srinivas said.

“Over Easter, it’s important to strike a balance between enjoying sweet treats and long-term oral health for both adults and children.

“Adults need to think about their own oral hygiene habits and set a good example for their children to follow.

“The best way to stop sugar from attacking tooth enamel is to limit the frequency of sugary treats, brush twice daily for at least two minutes with fluoridated toothpaste and floss every day,” he said.

Dental decay is the single most common chronic disease of childhood and can lead to serious infections and further dental and health problems later in life.

### Easter dental health tips from SWS LHD expert Dr Ravi Srinivas:

- Save sweet treats until the end of the day, closer to the time you brush your teeth
- Get regular check-ups (every six months) and see a dentist straight away if you have any pain or bleeding
- The most common site for tooth decay in children is between the back (molar) teeth, so parents should floss daily between children’s teeth as soon as the back teeth come through
- The amount of time spent brushing and the technique is more important than the type of toothbrush that is used (i.e. manual, battery-operated or electric), however all children should use a toothbrush with a small head and soft bristles
- Parents are encouraged to brush their children’s teeth as children cannot effectively clean their teeth by themselves until about eight years of age but should be encouraged to start ‘practicing’ by preschool age. Parental supervision is recommended for children up to the age 12.

**Free oral health services for children aged under 18 years are provided at clinics at Bankstown, Fairfield, Ingleburn, Liverpool, Narellan, Rosemeadow, Yagoona, Bowral and Tahmoor. For more details about the clinics, parents can phone 9293 3333, or for Bowral and Tahmoor 1300 559 393.**