

Dentists back sales ban on energy drinks for kids

The British Dental Association have applauded the proposed ban on sales of high caffeine energy drinks to under-16s in England.

The professional body stress there is real scope for gains in oral health given the high sugar content in some products, and that even the zero/low sugar versions have an erosive impact on teeth due to high levels of acidity.

Dentist leaders say government should go further and faster to tackle the catastrophic impact of unhealthy food and drink on children's health, with mandatory guidelines for industry and expansion of the sugar levy.

Tooth decay is the number one reason for hospital admissions among young children.

British Dental Association Chair Eddie Crouch said: 'Products that are habit forming, highly acidic and can contain over 20 teaspoons of sugar have no place on the menu for children. Our kids are growing up in a toxic food environment, and this boldness needs to be applied across the piece.'

BSPD publishes oral health guidance to help neurodivergent children benefit from the Supervised Toothbrushing initiative

The British Society of Paediatric Dentistry (BSPD) has developed two leaflets specifically tailored to support the oral health of children and young people (CYP) with Special Educational Needs (SEN), including those diagnosed as neurodivergent.

In response to the increase in children in the UK diagnosed with SEN, the new leaflet has been added to BSPD's parent information resource library providing guidance on how to include children with SEN in the national Supervised Toothbrushing Programme launched in early years settings by the Government in March. Earlier this year, BSPD published a leaflet providing oral health advice for parents and carers of autistic CYP on how to look after their teeth at home.

Currently, one in seven children is diagnosed as neurodivergent in the UK which means that the number of pupils needing SEN support has increased by 29.5% since 2016. BSPD knows that neurodiverse children can often fair worse when it comes to oral health.

The specific issues that children with additional needs can experience when trying to follow an oral care routine can include sensory challenges such as taste, texture and noise. BSPD experts often care for children with additional needs in clinic, so the Society is well placed to offer guidance to parents and carers struggling to do the best for their children's gums and teeth. The Society was careful to work in consultation with autism experts and parents of autistic CYP, to ensure these leaflets provide up to date support for those caring for neurodivergent children or

those with additional sensory needs.

Advice in the oral health leaflet for parents and carers of autistic children includes tips on the best position to take to support a child brushing their own teeth, the types of toothbrushes and toothpaste that might be better received by a neurodivergent child – as well as understanding achievable aims and ambitions when it comes to managing good oral health for your child.

The new leaflet which covers how to help your child engage with the Supervised Toothbrushing initiative includes the many ways that children with additional sensory needs can be supported to take part in Supervised Toothbrushing activities. For example, a child with sensory preferences may prefer to use a particular fluoride toothpaste such as a flavour-free or non-foaming paste. So, the advice is to ask the child's setting if your child could bring their own toothpaste as a reasonable adjustment. The guide also looks at how social stories and visual planners can help children with SEN.

Both leaflets can be found in an electronic, free-to-download format on BSPD's website. The Society wants to reach and support every individual and professional for whom meeting the oral health needs of an autistic CYP is



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an important part of their personal or professional life.

Dr Urshla Devalia, BSPD President and the Society's representative on the Department of Health & Social Care's Supervised Toothbrushing advisory group said: 'Every child deserves the chance to grow up free from pain and with a healthy mouth – and that includes children with special educational needs. BSPD's new leaflets are designed to give families of neurodiverse children the tools and confidence to make toothbrushing a positive daily routine.'

'We are delighted that the Department of Health & Social Care will be sharing our supervised toothbrushing leaflet with early years providers, helping to ensure this practical and encouraging advice reaches those who need it most. By starting early and reaching widely, we can help children with special educational needs enjoy the same high standard of oral health as every child deserves – a vital step in supporting some of the most vulnerable in our communities.'