

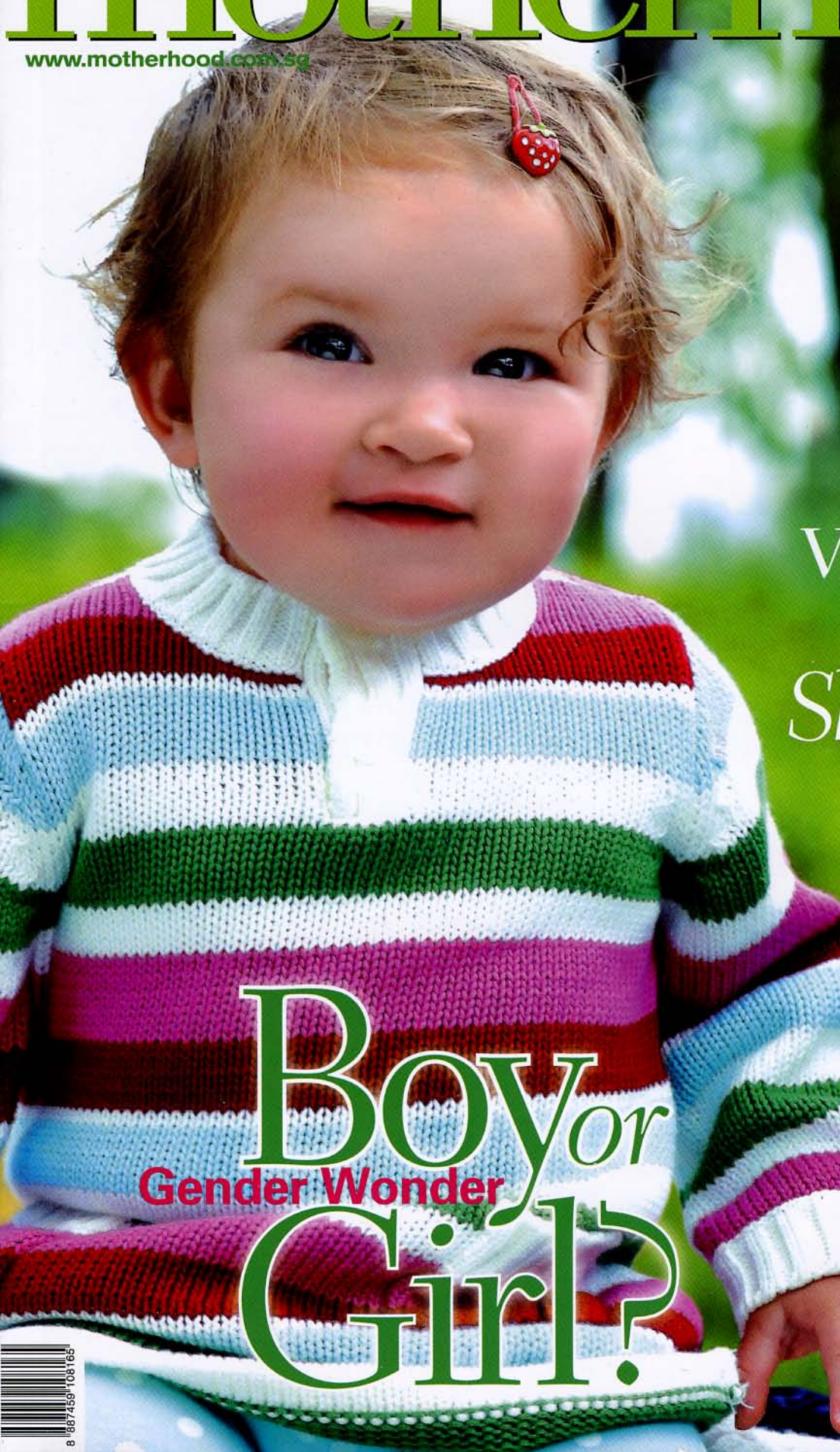
The No. 1 Choice for Mothers!

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My dentist told me to cut down or stop drinking soft drinks because it is damaging my teeth. Is there anything else that I should avoid? Can I drink non-carbonated drinks instead?

Your dentist is advising you to reduce taking soft drinks to avoid the issue of Acid Erosion. Acid Erosion occurs when acid dissolves the tooth enamel and dentine which insulate and protect the nerve within the tooth. If enough of the enamel and dentine is eroded away, then symptoms of pain and sensitivity may develop. It is important to appreciate that a child's primary teeth are about half as thick as an adult's and hence, only half as well protected from acid erosion. The common sources of acid are:

- Soft drinks, juices, sports drinks
- Chewable Vitamins and Sour Candies
- Stomach acid due to reflux problems

Non-carbonated drinks like sports drinks and juices have low a pH, which means they are acidic, as are soft drinks which contain phosphoric acid and carbonic acid outright. So the damage of acid erosion is not limited to only soft drinks, but can also arise through drinking non-carbonated liquids. To limit acid erosion you must prevent contact concentration (acidity), contact duration (exposure time) and contact occurrence (frequency) between the acid and the tooth material. If you cannot avoid these drinks then you should only take them occasionally, and when you do so, do not drink it over a long period of time and do not swish it around like tasting wine. If possible, use a straw so that the acid containing liquid is directed into your throat and away from your teeth. Also avoid Vitamin C chewable tablets which contain ascorbic acid. Acid does not just have to come from substances we ingest but potentially from within. Acid reflux from the stomach can also damage teeth. The treatment of which will require medical intervention by your GP.

My child has bad breath. What can I do about it?

Bad breath (halitosis) usually originates from one of two sources: the types of food we eat which contain sulphur compounds or the production of sulphur compounds by bacteria in our mouths that feed on leftover food particles. You should avoid food types that contain sulphur compounds, which are eliminated from our body via our

lungs. These food types include garlic, onion and cabbage. Persistent bad breath is most likely caused by bacteria releasing volatile sulphur compounds as a by product of their metabolism. Hence, you could reduce the degree of bad breath by reducing the amount of bacteria in your mouth by proper brushing, flossing and rinsing. Don't forget to brush your child's tongue as bacteria are also found there. Sometimes, despite these efforts, the bad breath may remain. This may indicate other issues like gum disease, gastric reflux and dry mouth. Seek a dental opinion as these will require dental or medical practitioner intervention.

How do I ensure my child can keep his teeth for life and minimise the need for any dental treatment?

Follow these three simple rules:

Diet: To minimise tooth decay, you need to understand that everybody has bugs (bacteria) in their mouth and it is the bacteria which converts sugar into acids which ultimately damages the tooth. Hence, if you maintain a low sugar and carbohydrate diet, it is almost impossible to get tooth decay.

Cleaning: Aside from a proper diet, you must reduce the bacteria and remove the plaque from your mouth. Brushing and flossing twice a day is minimal. Children can have their teeth flossed by an adult as soon as there are teeth that are in contact with one another.

Regular Visits: Aside from catching up with your dentist, these visits allow them to address issues before they become complicated and often costly to deal with. Regular visits will also help in re-enforcing and motivating proper home care and technique, much like a personal trainer aids in that of your physical health.



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