Schools in West Sussex are holding a lunch-time brushathon as part of National Smile Week.

The Oral Health Promotion Team for West Sussex Primary Care Trust has invited all primary schools in West Sussex to join the National Smile Month Brushathon during the week of 8 June. They are looking for a record number of children across West Sussex to brush their teeth in school at lunchtime one day during that week.

Schools have been asked to pick a day during the week beginning 8 June and invite everyone to bring in their toothbrush for a lunch-time Brushathon.

Thelma Edwards, West Sussex’s oral health promotion co-ordinator said: ‘In September 2007, new toothbrushing guidelines were released by the Department of Health. This event would give us the opportunity of making the guidelines known to the school staff, children and their families.

Oral health has an impact on so many different areas of life. Pain from decay or sepsis may affect school attendance and concentration. Repeated dental visits for treatment means time out of school too while dirty or artificially missing teeth may affect a child’s willingness to smile or express themselves.’

She added: ‘Supervised lunch-time toothbrushing at school is well evidenced as an effective oral health improvement programme. Whilst it is not practical or necessary for every school to carry out such a programme, we feel that a ‘one off’ effort would raise the profile of oral health for all the families that take part.’

Dental packs for children

In Doncaster, the primary care trust is handing ‘dental packs’ to all school children in Doncaster to promote twice daily brushing.

A spokesman for Doncaster PCT said: ‘Resources have also been purchased to support teachers and school nurses to promote oral health through the National Curriculum. Teachers and school nurses will attend a short training session in order to collect their resources.

Bill boards at supermarkets and train stations across Doncaster will also promote the message to brush twice daily and not to rinse after brushing, but spit out instead.’

PCT pilot evaluation

Peterborough PCT is holding a pilot study during National Smile Month with health visitors giving out information and ‘Brushing for Life’ packs to parents of babies and children aged eight months, one year and two years of age to coincide with their developmental assessments.

A spokeswoman for the PCT said: ‘The pilot will have an in-built audit and evaluation outcomes and liaison with local dentists and the PCT to see if there has been any increase in uptake of dental registration.’