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# A guide to the **Baby teeth need cleaning too!** initiative

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**Strengthening toothbrushing through Maternal and  
Child Health Services in Victoria 2018-2019**



Education  
and Training



dental health  
services victoria  
oral health for better health



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**Evidence suggests establishing a toothbrushing routine by 12 months is more effective than later.**

(Hallet K, O'Rourke P. 2003)

**Dental Health Service Victoria  
Health Promotion Unit  
November 2018**

DHSV acknowledges the provision of funds from Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services and the support from Department of Education and Training and the Municipal association of Victoria for this initiative.

# Baby teeth need cleaning too!

## Strengthening toothbrushing through Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Services 2018-2019

### Background

In 2012-2014 Dental Health Services Victoria (DHSV) in partnership with Department of Education and Training undertook research in four local government MCH Services to determine the feasibility and impacts of distribution of oral hygiene products (tooth packs) to families visiting the universal MCH service. The research findings showed a shift towards improvement of oral hygiene behaviours of children and families particularly from socio-economically disadvantaged and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Participant MCH nurses recommended the oral hygiene products should ideally be distributed to younger children (8-12 months) from families at greater risk of poor oral health.

**58% of infants and toddlers don't have their teeth brushed twice a day.**

(RCH Child Oral Health Poll march 2018)



**Many parents are confused about how often to brush and when to brush their children's teeth.**

(RCH Child Oral Health Poll 2018)



DHSV received funding from the Victorian State Government to support MCH nurses in the promotion of toothbrushing in 2018-2019 financial year. Based on the previous tooth packs research findings, this funding will provide mouth models for both the universal and the enhanced program and the provision of age appropriate toothbrushes and toothpaste for families enrolled in the enhanced program across the state.

## The objectives of the Baby teeth need cleaning too! initiative



Photo: Ernst Vikne

1

**Strengthen toothbrushing demonstrations within the MCH program.**

2

**Improve families' knowledge and awareness of oral hygiene practices for children up to 2 years of age.**

## The implementation strategies of the Baby teeth need cleaning too! initiative

### **Universal MCH Program supplied with**

- Mouth models for every office where a MCH nurse conducts the KAS visits.

### **Enhanced MCH Program supplied with**

- Age appropriate toothbrushes and toothpaste for family members.
- LittleTeeth book and its User Guide.
- Mouth model for tooth brushing demonstration.

### **Evaluation**

- Online data collection of products distributed to families.
- Short online feedback survey for all MCH nurses.
- Feedback from family members about the initiative.

# Delivering Baby teeth need cleaning too!

Steps	Hints and tips
<p><b>Start a discussion about toothbrushing when teeth first appear</b></p>	<p><b>Example questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Have you started brushing yet?</i></li> <li>● <i>Can you tell me more about how toothbrushing is going?</i></li> <li>● <i>Do you have any worries about toothbrushing?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Offer to do a toothbrushing demonstration?</b></p>	<p>Refer to pages 26-27 of The Little Teeth Book for details.</p> <p><b>Example question:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Has anyone shown you how to brush your child's teeth before?</i></li> </ul> 
<p><b>Discuss challenges and offer advice</b></p>	<p>Refer to page 9 for tips to share with parents.</p>
<p><b>Do a Lift the lip check</b></p>	
<p><b>Provide a tooth pack for eligible families</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Families enrolled in the Enhanced MCH program, or</li> <li>● Families enrolled in the Enhanced MCH program in 2018-2019 but transitioned to the Universal MCH Service.</li> </ul> <p><b>At following visits review how the family is progressing with toothbrushing and encourage efforts.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide toothbrushes and age appropriate toothpaste for each member of the household.</li> <li>● Record product distributed on the data collection form (see below for more information).</li> <li>● Include information sheets for families: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– How to brush teeth</li> <li>– Story time books about teeth</li> <li>– Toothbrushing apps and videos</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  <p>There should be enough product to provide two rounds of tooth packs for each family enrolled in the Enhanced MCH program in 2018-2019. We suggest the second distribution occur about 3 months later.</p>

\* DHSV does not endorse any particular brand of toothpaste or toothbrush.

# The resource distribution and data collection form

For each family eligible for a tooth pack (see page 5), please complete the online Tooth Packs distribution form at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/BHSMV8R](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BHSMV8R).

The online questions are as follows.

[www.surveymonkey.com/r/BHSMV8R](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BHSMV8R)

LGA of MCH Service \_\_\_\_\_  Universal MCHN  Enhanced MCHN

## 1. Family demographics

- a) Does any member identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?  Yes  No  
b) Does the family speak English at home?  Yes  No  
c) Do you or your partner have a healthcare card?  Yes  No

2. How many children under 5 years of age in this family? \_\_\_\_\_

## 3. At this visit, for any of the children under 5 years, did you

- a) complete a mouth check?  Yes  No  
b) identify any signs of oral disease?  Yes  No  
c) refer to a dental professional?  Yes  No  
d) do a toothbrushing demonstration?  Yes  No

## 4. Oral hygiene product supply to family

1st time  2nd time

**Number of toothbrushes:**

Junior (child) \_\_\_\_\_

Adult \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of tubes of toothpaste:**

Low fluoride (for children 18mths–6yrs) \_\_\_\_\_

Standard fluoride (for adults and children 6 years +) \_\_\_\_\_

## 5. For their children, aged between 6 months and under 8 years please tick the box that best describes the family's teeth cleaning routines

**How many times a day do their children clean their teeth?**

- Never  
 Less than once a day  
 Once a day  
 Twice a day  
 Tooth cleaning not started  
 Don't know

**How often would the parent/carer assist with toothbrushing?**

- Never  
 Less than once a day  
 Once a day  
 Twice a day  
 Tooth cleaning not started  
 Don't know

# Resources for MCH nurses on toothbrushing

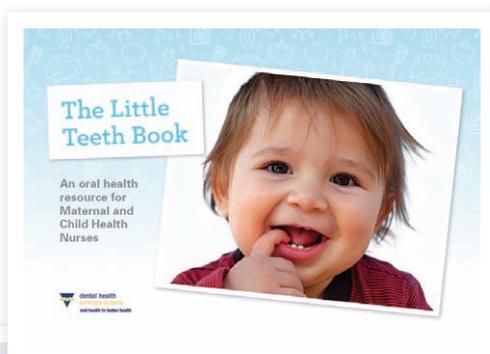
## 1. Video on how to clean toddlers teeth

This video from ABC Baby Talk Radio (Victoria) by Margaret Burin and Penny Johnston can be accessed via the DHSV website [www.dhsv.org.au/professionals/maternal-and-child-health-nurses](http://www.dhsv.org.au/professionals/maternal-and-child-health-nurses) under resources for Maternal and Child Health nurses.

### Cleaning your baby's teeth

By Margaret Burin and Penny Johnston

Even though your toddlers' first teeth are just starting to poke through, you need to get started on a routine that will involve you cleaning your child's teeth twice a day, probably until they are well into primary school. This video shows how you avoid the frustration of not really knowing what you're doing whilst trying to wrangle an uncooperative toddler!



## 2. Pictorial resource

### Little Teeth Book

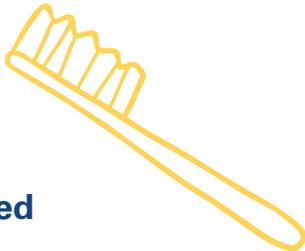
A parent engagement tool for MCH nurses.

See pages 26-27 for key messages about toothbrushing.

Check with your MCH Coordinator if your office does not have a copy.



# Resources for families



Hard copies of the three family resources are provided to include in the tooth packs for eligible families.

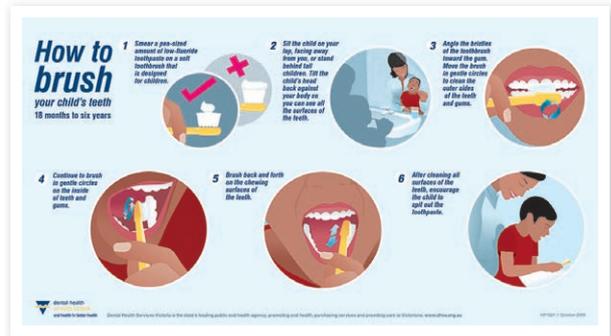
- “How to brush guide” for children 18 months to 6 years
- An information sheet on story books about teeth
- A list of apps and videos available for parents

Dental Health Services Victoria does not endorse any particular brand, app, video or story book, but parents may find them useful to support their efforts in establishing a toothbrushing routine for their children.

## Toothbrushing information for families

### How to brush guide

[www.dhsv.org.au/professionals/maternal-and-child-health-nurses](http://www.dhsv.org.au/professionals/maternal-and-child-health-nurses)



### Toothbrushing apps and videos

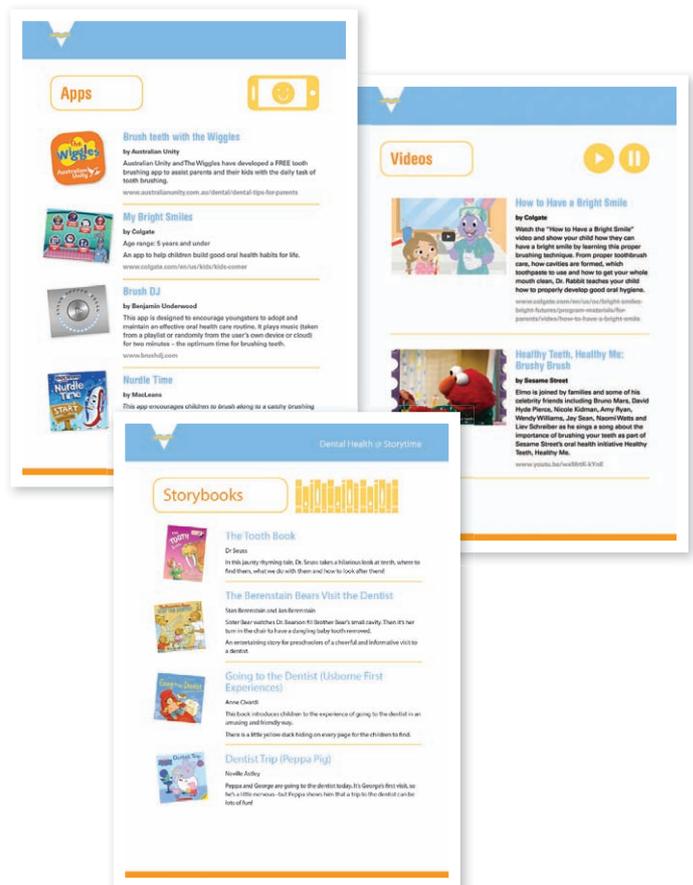
[www.dhsv.org.au/professionals/maternal-and-child-health-nurses](http://www.dhsv.org.au/professionals/maternal-and-child-health-nurses)

### Storybooks

Storybooks with a healthy teeth message.

Many of the book may be available at the local library.

[www.dhsv.org.au/professionals/maternal-and-child-health-nurses](http://www.dhsv.org.au/professionals/maternal-and-child-health-nurses)



# Toothbrushing Tips

Here are a few suggestions to share with parents but you will have your own tips and ideas as well.



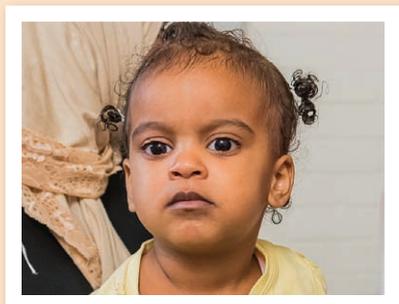
## Leading by example

- Children learn by imitating others. Brush your own teeth with your child. This helps to reinforce that brushing teeth is a normal part of life.
- Make brushing a family routine.



## Make brushing fun

- There are lots of apps and videos to help engage children and make brushing fun. See the App information sheet and visit the websites for some great ideas.
- Ask your child to brush their favourite doll or toy's teeth before you brush their teeth.
- Sing your child's song or favourite nursery rhymes while brushing their teeth.



## Avoid brushing time turning into a struggle

- Let your child have a go at brushing their own teeth, but remember children will need help from an adult until they turn eight.
- Let your child brush your teeth for you first and then make it your turn to brush their teeth.
- Have your child looking at a mirror, while you stand behind to brush. This makes children feel more in control and more at ease.



## Be positive

- Praise your child – “what a great smile you have”, “I am so proud of you for taking care of your teeth”.
- Provide a reason for brushing – “brushing gets rid of those nasty germs that make your teeth sore”, “brushing keeps your teeth strong”.

Every child is unique so encourage parents to try different ways until they find a solution that works best for their child.

# How will Baby teeth need cleaning too! be evaluated?

Dental Health Services Victoria would like to evaluate this initiative by the end of the financial year. The evaluation is expected to report on:

1. The reach and delivery of the initiative through the target population group
2. Perspective of the MCH nurses and families on the implementation of the initiative
3. Implications for future programs and policy.

It is hoped that the evaluation results will be shared with participating MCH services.

## Resource distribution and data collection form (see page 6)



- The Tooth Packs distribution form is intended to be completed by MCH nurses as soon as tooth packs are distributed to eligible families.
- You can complete this online at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/BHSMV8R](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BHSMV8R). Type this link into your browser to access the survey. This link will also be shared with MCH coordinators via email.
- Dental Health Services Victoria will send three monthly feedback to the MCH services.

## Feedback from MCH nurses about the initiative

- An online questionnaire to be completed by the MCH nurses in the last quarter of the 2018-2019 financial year.
- The purpose is to gain an insight into the usefulness or appropriateness of resources supporting toothbrushing.
- A link for this online survey will be sent to MCH Coordinators to be shared with their MCH nurses.



## Feedback from Families about the program – online questionnaire

- DHSV requests the assistance of the Enhanced MCH nurses to recruit and interview five consenting families enrolled in the enhanced program.
- The online questionnaire will seek parents' point of view on toothbrushing demonstration, receiving the toothbrushing products and the printed resources.
- Parent information sheet and consent forms will be sent to MCH Coordinators/ Team Leaders to be shared with Enhanced MCH nurses.
- The interviews should take place in the last quarter of the 2018-2019 financial year.

## References

Royal Children's Hospital Child Oral Health Poll March 2018

[www.rchpoll.org.au/polls/child-oral-health-habits-in-australian-homes/](http://www.rchpoll.org.au/polls/child-oral-health-habits-in-australian-homes/)

Hallet KB, O'Rourke PK Social and behavioural determinants of early childhood caries.  
Australian Dental Journal 2003; 48:(1):27-33

[www.cochrane.org/CD008829/ORAL\\_flossing-to-reduce-gum-disease-and-tooth-decay](http://www.cochrane.org/CD008829/ORAL_flossing-to-reduce-gum-disease-and-tooth-decay)

MCH nurses will play a crucial role in the implementation and evaluation of this initiative, and DHSV would like to thank you again for your support and collaboration.

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