

healthyfamilies healthysmiles

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Taking the fuss out of the brush

Cleaning teeth morning and night is important. Children don't always enjoy having their teeth cleaned so some hints and tips to share with families can be a useful part of your toolkit as an oral health champion.

Routine, routine, routine

- Children are less likely to resist brushing if it is part of their everyday morning and night time routine. Encourage families to start good habits early.
- Before teeth arrive, start wiping gums with a damp cloth or introducing a toothbrush to play with at bath time.
- Once teeth appear clean them morning and night, no matter what.

Keep it upbeat

- Advise parents to praise days where the child is co-operative and tell them how grown up they have been. Praise and hugs is enough reward.
- Encourage positive language, for example: "What a great smile you have, can we make it sparkle?" or "You are doing such a great job".
- Play or sing a song while brushing. Singing a song that lasts 2-3 minutes will let the child know how long until toothbrushing time is over.
- There are lots of apps and videos to help engage children and make brushing fun, visit www.sesamestreet.org/parents/topicsandactivities/toolkits/teeth or <http://2min2x.org/> for ideas.
- Tell a story about animals with big teeth while brushing.
- Ask your child to brush their favourite doll or toy's teeth before you brush theirs.

Avoid brushing time turning into a power struggle

- Let children have a go at brushing their own teeth but remember that children need help from an adult until around 7 or 8 years of age. Taking turns while brushing

will develop skills while ensuring that the teeth are properly cleaned.

- If the child is upset or difficult encourage parents to stay calm and continue to brush if they can. If the child refuses, suggest waiting ten minutes and then trying again. Encourage parents to brush their own teeth in this time while the child watches.

Be a positive role model

- Make sure children see other family members brushing. This will reinforce that cleaning teeth is a regular part of life.

Reassure parents that they are doing the right thing. Hopefully, with a few tricks, they will have a routine in no time.



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Baby Teeth Count too! for supported playgroups

Healthy Families Healthy Smiles is now piloting a new oral health flip for supported playgroups

In consultation with early childhood professionals, the Healthy Families Healthy Smiles team have developed the Baby teeth count too! – oral health information for playgroups flipchart. The flipchart is an educational tool for supported playgroup professionals to start discussions with families about oral health and how to keep their child's smile healthy.

Supported playgroups were identified as the ideal setting for such a resource as families can be involved with the playgroup for several years for several hours per week. The flipchart uses 13 simple messages with supporting photographs to convey oral health messages for children aged 0 to 3 years.

The pilot of the flipchart has now commenced. To date, DHSV has conducted training sessions with 28 early childhood professionals from Bass Coast Health Service, Victorian Cooperative on Children's Services for Ethnic Groups (VICSEG) and Wyndham, Brimbank and Hume City Councils. Training has been booked with Frankston and Melton City Councils and Queen Elizabeth Centre. The training allows facilitators to familiarise themselves with the flipchart to increase their confidence to use the flipchart to promote oral health with families attending their playgroups.

After facilitators complete the training, they will identify which messages to focus on and will run a session with families. Feedback from both parents and facilitators will guide the further development of the flipchart.

For more information contact Kristen Gurney on (03) 9341 1196 or email Kristen.gurney@dhsv.org.au



Bass Coast supported playgroup facilitators and the South Coast maternal and child health nurse discussing the piloting of the Baby teeth Count Too! flipchart

Thanking a Playgroup Working Group member

We thank the Smith Family's representative Margaret Rutherford for her commitment to oral health

Margaret Rutherford has been a passionate and valuable member of the Healthy Families Healthy Smiles Playgroup Working Group since the group started in mid-2013. Margaret represented The Smith Family in her capacity as Project Manager for Communities for Children -Brimbank.

Margaret recently resigned from the working group as she is moving to a new role at The Smith Family. Her expertise and insight helped to shape the new playgroup oral health flipchart. Dental Health Services Victoria, particularly the project team, would like to acknowledge Margaret's contribution to our project.

Thank you Margaret for all your efforts and we wish you all the very best for your new role.



Tooth Tips: out with the old and in with the new

The tooth tips series provides valuable oral health information to families with young children. Dental Health Services Victoria recently updated these resources to keep them relevant and make them easier to understand.

Dental Health Services Victoria (DHSV) provides the tooth tips fact sheets through the maternal and child health service, reaching up to 80,000 families each year. The series can also be used by other health and early childhood professionals to support families around oral health.

The review process included:

- checking the information against the latest evidence including the recent Australian Dietary Guidelines and Infant Feeding Guidelines,
- consulting with 260 professionals including maternal and child health nurses and other early childhood professionals
- exploring the best ways to present information

so that everybody could benefit, as 53 percent of Australians have low or limited literacy.

As a result the new facts sheets focus on critical messages such as bottles, sweet foods, cleaning and importance of first teeth. They contain less text and more photos, making the key messages easier to understand.

The fact sheets are available for download at www.dhsv.org.au under the professionals tab click on 'oral health resources' and then 'fact sheets and tip cards'.



DHSV thanks all of the parents, maternal and child health nurses and early childhood professionals who participated in the review process and the Nursing Program team at DEECD for their input and support.

Professional bodies making a stand on oral health

Dental Health Services Victoria is partnering with the Dietetics Association of Australia (DAA) and the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) to produce position statements on oral health.

In May the Dietetics Association of Australia and Dental Health Services Victoria convened a working group to develop the joint position statement. The statement outlines the rationale for oral health and a summary of oral health practice for dietitians. The members representing the DAA are

- Evelyn Volders, Senior Lecturer/Course Convenor (Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics), Monash University
- Sarah McKay Senior Clinical Dietitian Cystic Fibrosis & Oral Health Westmead Hospital & Centre for Oral Health and Clinical Associate Lecturer University of Sydney and
- Lindy Sank Dietitian/Lecturer Sydney Dental Hospital.



Dental Health Services Victoria members are Adjunct Professor Dr. Hanny Calache, Allison Ridge and Gillian Lang. The Department of Health is represented by Jessica Kempler. The groups aim to have the draft ready by December.

The Victorian Branch Director of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia Mr Bill Suen and Professional Practice Pharmacist, Dani Li are leading the initiative to develop the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia position statement on oral health. Dental Health Services Victoria staff supporting this work include Adjunct Professor Hanny Calache, Dr Anil Raichur and Allison Ridge. The group is aiming to have a draft ready for the review of the national office of the PSA by the end of the year.



Position statements that define the role of these professions in oral health promotion provide a foundation to build capacity of the workforce to offer consistent, evidence based advice and referral to appropriate services. All parties recognise that the work really begins once the position statements have been launched. DHSV will continue to work in partnership with these professional bodies to support the dissemination and implementation of these policy initiatives.

Raising a Smile

South Coast Best Start Community Facilitator works in partnership to promote oral health in Bass Coast and South Gippsland

In Bass Coast and South Gippsland the Best Start Community Facilitator, Karen Chugg and local partners have played key roles to successfully support local oral health initiatives. Through their efforts the importance of oral health has been raised in relation to Health and Wellbeing plans and at related municipal forums. Bass Coast Health has implemented on-site screening programs in all kindergartens; maternal and child health nurses screen children and advise parents on dental care; and the Shires and Primary Care Partnership promote healthy eating and the availability of fresh food.

In her role as Best Start Facilitator, Karen has made the most of opportunities. Achievements include: a supervised tooth brushing initiative established in some Best Start supported play groups including a teenage parents' playgroup and isolated kindergartens to increase the number of times children brush their teeth. Two local specialist schools for children with additional needs have adopted the initiative including oral health and healthy eating policies. All maternal and child health nurses in South Coast have been provided with demonstration models of giant Teeth and brushes, to assist with their screening and to engage young children. A formal ongoing agreement was established between the Aboriginal Health Service, Supported Playgroups and the local public dental service ensuring that dental visits are facilitated for all children attending supported playgroups and all Aboriginal families annually. With the assistance of a successful submission to the Child Global Oral Health Taskforce, toothbrushes and toothpaste, together with oral health literature, has been supplied to outlying small communities, kindergartens and childcare centres.

Karen has been active on DHSV's Healthy Families Healthy Smiles Early Childhood Educators' working group, representing Best Start facilitators. Karen has also been instrumental in supporting the piloting of a new oral health flipchart for supported playgroups. Healthy Families Healthy Smiles is lucky to have community oral health champions like Karen and her partners supporting the project and oral health promotion in Bass Coast and South Gippsland.



Spotlight on: Raising Children Network

The 'go to' place for parents and carers for information on raising children.

Raising Children Network is an Australian parenting website launched in 2006. It is funded by the federal government to provide comprehensive, practical and expert child health advice and parenting information covering children aged 0-15 years. Dental Health Services Victoria partners with Raising Children Network to provide oral health content for the site. As professionals you can be confident that the online material is evidence-based and is regularly reviewed. Encourage any first time parents or those who have not heard of the Network to visit raisingchildren.net.au as it is a valuable resource.



get in touch

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