

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

COMMUNITY CHILDREN'S CENTRE

DENTAL HYGIENE STATEMENT

Your child's first or primary teeth are as important as permanent teeth and require daily care. For a young child these teeth are essential for chewing and speaking properly and for the successful eruption of the adult/secondary teeth.

Children who are taught and have adult's role modelling appropriate oral hygiene and a healthy diet are more likely to maintain healthy teeth throughout adulthood.

Children can develop Early Childhood Caries (ECC) and without treatment this can lead to toothache, infection and early loss of teeth. However, the risk of ECC can be decreased by:

- Starting oral hygiene from birth. A baby's gums should be wiped after feeding;
- Limiting the occurrence of settling a baby to sleep with breast milk or by using a nursing bottle, sweetened flavoured milk, fruit juice or cordial;
- Limiting high amounts of sugar in the baby's diet;
- Encouraging health snacks and as they get older, try limiting the amount of snacks;
- Encouraging your baby to begin drinking from a cup from 9 to 12 months of age;
- Undertaking a good brushing and flossing routine;
- Providing fluoridated water, which assists in decreasing the risk of ECC but avoid fluoride toothpaste until your child is 18 months of age and then use child-strength until age six;
- Taking your baby to the dentist for a check up within 6 months of the eruption of their first tooth or by their first birthday;
- Actively supervise children's cleaning of teeth until about age 10;

Tips on Brushing:

1. Once the baby/primary teeth start to appear, it is recommended that parents use a baby's toothbrush with a small head and soft, rounded bristles;
2. Up to the age of 18 months the teeth should be brushed with plain water¹;
3. Teeth should be brushed twice a day – morning and evening;
4. Store tooth brush out of child's reach.

¹ There are special low-fluoride toothpastes that have been developed for children and these can be introduced from around the age of 18 months, however always read the directions on toothpaste for age suitability. Use only a smear of toothpaste and ensure your child spits out the toothpaste after brushing.

Tips on Flossing

Flossing assists in removing decay causing bacteria from between the teeth and keeps gums healthy.

1. You can start flossing when your child is about two and a half years old;
2. Flossing can be done daily and at a minimum, at least twice a week;
3. Slide the floss between the teeth, and gently work it up and down, against the surface of each tooth²;
4. After flossing, rinse with water, then brush or visa versa if you prefer.

Tips on Making Healthy Food Choices

Foods that can contribute to dental decay (ECC) include those high in sugar such as concentrated fruit snack bars, sweets, muesli bars and sugary beverages and juices. This is because the sugar feeds the destructive bacteria in children's mouths, which in turn puts acid on your child's teeth. Refined foods such as savoury, starchy crackers and chips can also have high carbohydrate (sugar) content; therefore it is important to check the food information panel on packaged foods to assist with determining foods with high carbohydrate or sugar content.

While it is unrealistic to completely cut these foods out, the Australian Dental Association has some tips to minimise dental decay relating to their consumption.

1. Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods, especially those rich in calcium and low in acids and sugar;
2. Enjoy health snacks, with cheese and fruit being ideal choices. Some foods assist in protecting teeth – milk and some cheeses are recognised as having protective qualities to help prevent dental decay;
3. Offer a diet high in fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain cereals, lean meats and dairy products;
4. **Limit sugary snacks such as lollies, fruit bars, muesli bars, biscuits, dried fruit, cordials, juice and soft drinks;**
5. Many healthy foods contain high amounts of sugar and consumed frequently can cause the growth of dental plaque. Cleaning your child's teeth morning and evening along with flossing and regular visits to the dentist will greatly reduce the risk of tooth decay.

Brushing teeth while at the Centre:

The healthy food choices recommended above are reflected in the Centre's Menu. However, if you choose for your child to brush their teeth at the Centre you must provide the toothbrush and an appropriate container for storage. **You are not required to provide toothpaste.** Toothpaste will not be offered at the Centre due to potential health hazards.

First Aid Procedures:

Injuries to the teeth can occur easily, especially during childhood. Most injuries to primary (first) teeth **occur between one and three years of age.** As children begin to walk, they frequently fall forward and knock their teeth on objects such as coffee tables. *See your dental professional immediately if a tooth is injured.*

² Avoid snapping the floss down between the teeth as the floss may cut into the gum and cause bleeding.

In the event of an injury to a tooth we suggest you follow these steps as recommended by the Australian Dental Association:

Permanent Tooth:

1. Handle the tooth by its crown – not its root;
2. Rinse tooth in saliva, milk or cool water – do not scrub;
3. Put tooth back in place and hold there;
4. Contact your dentist immediately.

If you can not replace the tooth in its socket;

1. Store the tooth in milk or wrap it in gladwrap;
2. Contact your dentist.

Primary (baby) teeth:

If a primary (baby) tooth has been knocked out, **do not** try to put it back. Visit your dentist to make sure that there are no other problems.

Links to other documents:

Information for Users and Conditions of Enrolment – Centre Information Manual;
Staff and Family Induction checklists;
Maintenance of Building Statement;
Children’s Play Environment Checklist – Indoor/Outdoor

Reference:

Australian Dental Association Inc – media release – caring for teeth for life – October 2007
Australian Dental Association Inc – 7 tips for healthy baby teeth
Australian Dental Association Inc – Oral hygiene for babies and toddlers
Australian Dental Association Inc – Healthy eating equals healthy teeth
Australian Dental Association Inc – Tooth development in babies and toddlers
Department of Human Services – Dental Health Dental Safety – January 1997
Department of Human Services – Why No Sweet Drinks For Children – November 1998
National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC): Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) Quality Practices Guide (2005) – Principle 6.3
Children’s Services Act 1996, Section 26: Protection of children from hazards

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