

Oral Health in our new country



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Introduction to the project

Oral health is more than just having good teeth and healthy gums; it affects people physically and psychologically by influencing how they grow, enjoy life, look, speak, chew, taste food and socialise, as well as their feelings of social well being¹.

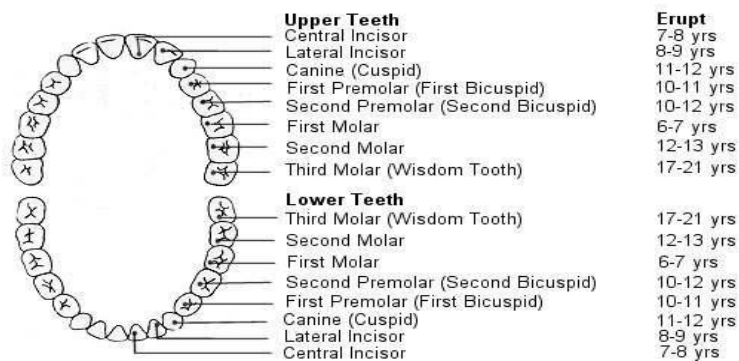
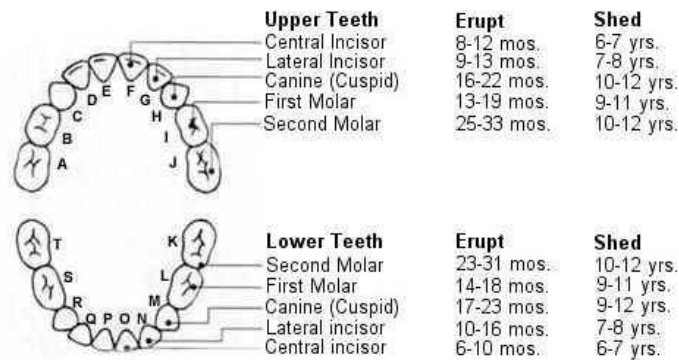
Poor oral health causes pain and suffering and affects the quality of life and wellbeing of those affected².

Gum disease and tooth decay are the most common conditions affecting oral health. If gum disease and tooth decay are not treated they can lead to tooth loss and may have a direct impact on general health.

Centacare Tasmania in conjunction with Calvary Health Care Tasmania has developed this project to promote oral health awareness to our new and emerging communities in Southern Tasmania. Our hope is this booklet and accompanying audio CD will be useful to current and future humanitarian entrants in the state.

We can have healthy teeth if we:

- ◇ **Eat well** - Eat a wide variety of healthy foods and drinks for meals and snacks
- ◇ **Drink well** - Drink lots of tap water
- ◇ **Clean well** - Brush after breakfast and before bed with a fluoride toothpaste. Spit don't rinse.
- ◇ **Play well** - Protect your mouth at sports
- ◇ **Stay well** - Have a regular dental check– up



Looking after teeth as an Adult

- Brush your teeth at least twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste – it is good to get into the habit of brushing your teeth after breakfast in the morning and before bed at night. If you are fasting for personal or religious observances don't forget to brush your teeth – even though your food intake may be different on these days or in this month, it is still important to have good oral health.
- Use dental floss to clean in between your teeth and at the gum line – this will assist with tartar control.
- Spit out toothpaste—don't swallow and don't rinse!
- Sugary foods and drinks should be eaten with a meal.
- Smart snack foods are low sugar and low fat.
- See the dentist regularly.



Oral Health for Women

Women have different oral health needs through their different life phases.

During pregnancy – women may experience gum irritation through a build up of plaque. It is a good idea to have a dental check up as part of your antenatal routine. Maintain good oral health by cleaning twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste and reduce the amount of decay producing bacteria.

Through menopause – altered taste, dry mouth, irritated gums may be experienced.

Taking oral contraceptives – there may be an increase in inflamed gums.



Dental health hints for babies and toddlers

- Don't give sweetened drinks from the bottle or sippy cups as they can cause tooth decay.
- Bottles are for formula, breast milk and water.
- As soon as teeth appear start cleaning them! For babies wipe teeth and gums with a moist cloth. Gently introduce tooth brushing and from 18 months use a small amount of low fluoride toothpaste
- Never use sweet syrups like honey, on a dummy.
- Take the bottle away once the baby has finished drinking.
- Introduce a cup from 6-8 months and wean to a cup by 1 year.
- Don't put baby to bed with a bottle

Brushing your toddlers teeth

- It is important to start cleaning children's teeth as soon as they appear
- Clean teeth twice daily, in the morning for a fresh start to the day and before going to bed
- Children will need supervision and assistance to clean their teeth up until the age of 8
- Use a small soft toothbrush and replace regularly when worn
- Brush along the chewing surfaces of the teeth
- Brush gums gently
- Use a circular or jiggling motion on the outside surfaces
- Spit out the toothpaste – don't swallow and don't rinse.



Food for Teeth

Good nutrition is vital for good oral health

- Choose from a wide variety of foods everyday
- Save sugary snack foods and treats for special occasions
- Fresh fruit and vegetables are good snack choices
- Water is the cheapest and best thirst quencher

The more sugary foods and drinks we have the more likely we are to get tooth decay. When we drink and eat, the decay producing bacteria in plaque uses the sugars in foods to make acid, that cause decay in the teeth. Some foods and drinks (like soft drinks) are acidic and frequent use will cause erosion of the tooth enamel.



Drinks for babies and toddlers

From birth to 12 months

- Breast milk and infant formula should be the main food and drinks at this age
- Fruit juice drinks are not recommended for children less than 6 months of age and should only be offered diluted once a day.
- Cow's milk, soft drinks, herbal teas are not recommended
- If you are providing your baby under 6 months with water ensure that it is boiled and cooled

Drinks for children

- Water is the best drink for children – to make it more appealing you can provide it in a special glass or bottle, add slices of fruit for flavour, lead by example and show children that adults like drinking water too.
- Plain milk does contain natural sugars but it is also rich in other important nutrients like protein and calcium—it is important not to flavour milk. Reduced fat milks are not suitable for children under 2 years of age. Milk should not replace other good foods children need like fruit, pasta, vegetables, meat, cheese and cereals and breads.

Tooth decay is preventable.

Tooth decay is caused by decay producing bacteria in the mouth. The first sign of decay may be white spots occurring on the teeth, usually near the gums. At this stage is still possible to repair damage through good oral hygiene practices and dental advice.

If these white spots are not treated they may progress into holes or cavities. These cavities may become stained (brown or black) and damage to the structure of the tooth may occur. If you see something which does not look right—check with your dental professional

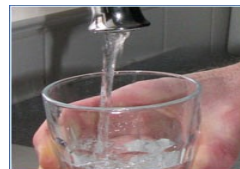


Tooth decay occurs when decay producing bacteria in plaque convert sugars and carbohydrates into acid. This acid attacks the surface of the tooth and tooth decay develops.

Frequent usage of sugary foods and drinks can cause tooth decay; saliva helps protect teeth by diluting acids, having a dry mouth increased the chance of tooth decay. Some medications may cause dry mouth—if in doubt speak to your Doctor or pharmacist.

How can we reduce the risk of tooth decay?

- Eating well balanced meals, limiting snacking between meals.
- By cleaning teeth at least twice a day with a small, soft, toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste. The head of your toothbrush should be small enough to get to hard to reach places. Make sure that you throw out worn toothbrushes and don't share tooth brushes.
- Drink lots of water during the day – good for your body as well your teeth, its free, safe and fluoridated.
- Have regular check-ups with your dentist



Bad Breath

Bad breath is the name given to unpleasant odours exhaled when breathing. Bad breath can have very negative impacts personally and socially.

In most cases bad breath comes from the mouth itself and may change during the day as a result of foods we eat, smoking or drinking or because of mouth dryness.

Bad breath can have many causes – some of these may be gum disease, tooth decay, smoking, eating certain foods and drinks, or infections.

Some sources of bad breath are:

- mouth (food may be caught in teeth, dry mouth, and gum disease)
- nose – from sinus infections
- tonsils – an infection here may be one cause

Bad breath may also be an indication of something else which may be wrong with the gastric system.

Reduce bad breath by practicing good oral hygiene – brushing your teeth regularly, using dental floss to clean between the teeth, and seeing the dentist. Eat a healthy diet and be aware that certain foods can cause bad breath (onions, garlic). Drink lots of water during the day – a dry mouth can be the cause of bad breath!



Mouth Sores

Mouth sores can be caused by injury or infection.

Cold sores can occur on the lips and the tongue. It is important to try not to infect others while the sores are open or weeping. There are many different ointments and treatments available at the chemist which may relieve discomfort.



Dental abscesses are caused by infection inside the tooth, infection of the gum, or injury to the tooth. These abscesses may cause facial swelling. It is important to seek medical and/ or dental attention and advice for abscesses in the teeth.

Mouth injuries like bitten lips or cheeks can occur during eating, a fall etc. Rinsing the mouth with warm salt water can assist healing. Ulcers and other sore spots may also occur in the mouth – again the use of warm salt water may assist, there are also treatments available at the chemist.

Service providers of oral health care

- **Community Dental Centre** — For further information please contact your nearest dental clinic/centre:
 - ⇒ Hobart, Southern Dental Centre: Tel: 6214 5411
 - ⇒ Burnie Dental Centre: Tel: 6440 7104
 - ⇒ Devonport Dental Centre: Tel: 6421 7729
 - ⇒ Launceston, Northern Dental Centre: Tel: 6336 4100

Information about dental services for children and adolescents (south)

http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/health_and_wellbeing/oral_health/related_topics/oral_health_for_adults/services/dental_and_oral_health_services_-_adults

http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/health_and_wellbeing/oral_health/related_topics/oral_health_for_children/services/dental_and_oral_health_services_-_children

- **Private dental clinics** —
 - ⇒ Look under 'Dentists' in the Yellow Pages

Other Resources

Tasmanian Information

- **Regional Information on Services**
- **Plain English Fact Sheets**
 - ⇒ Hobart Area 6214 5411
 - ⇒ Launceston Area 6336 4100
 - ⇒ Devonport 6421 7729
 - ⇒ Burnie Area 6440 7104
- **Web links for Oral Health for 0-12 year olds**
 - ⇒ **Northern Territory**—Under 5's Oral Health' – simple, picture posters at http://www.health.nt.gov.au/Oral_Health/Oral_Health_Promotion/index.aspx
- **Video clips on how to brush teeth, etc.**
 - ⇒ **VICTORIA:** <http://www.dhsv.org.au/oral-health-resources/video-and-podcast-resources/>
 - 'Don't be afraid! – a guide to positive dental visits with pre-schoolers
 - 'Healthy Choices for Healthy Mouths' – 4 videos on how to eat well, drink well, clean well and stay well.
 - 'Caring for your child's teeth' – is for parents – see the second video, 'A check-up for oral health (part 2 of 2)'

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