

Dental Health

Background

Healthy teeth and gums are necessary for general good health. They play an important part in the digestion of food, correct speech and self-confidence through enhancing our appearance.

Given the number of children who attend childcare and the length of time they spend in care, childcare plays a significant role in the prevention of teeth and gum diseases in young children, and in the development of healthy teeth and gums. Further, childcare provides the ideal opportunity to instil in children, long-term oral health habits.

Policy statement

The Service promotes good dental habits, and is also committed to minimising any risk to children's dental health from food and drink consumed at the Service. The Service follows recommendations from Queensland Health (Oral Health Unit), and provides this information to families.

Strategies and practices

- The oral health message is promoted amongst families through notice boards, newsletters, verbal communication, parent-educator meetings, and dental health educational materials such as Happy Teeth (Queensland Health), and the celebration of Dental Awareness Month. QA 2.1.3
- Educators are provided with professional development opportunities in oral health and receive resources, such as the Happy Teeth Resource Kit, and updates from the Oral Health Unit (Queensland). QA 2.1.3
- Children are encouraged to drink water after eating. QA 2.2.1
- Educators use opportunities that arise during children's play and at meal and snack times to talk to the children about dental health issues. The Service resources include plastic 'healthy food,' and toys. When appropriate to children's interest and the program, educators intentionality teach children about looking after their teeth through activities such as: action songs and rhymes; books, puzzles and games; food preparation; and, cooking experiences. QA 2.1.3
- To ensure that children receive early positive experiences, the Service arranges for dentists and appropriate allied dental health professionals to visit the Service to talk to the children about dental hygiene. QA 2.1.3
- Mothers are encouraged and supported to breastfeed.
- Only milk or water is used in baby bottles.
- Educators do not put children to sleep with milk or formula in their bottles. Educators remove a child's bottle as soon as feeding is completed.

Links to other policies

- Food Preparation, Storage and Handling Policy
- Nutrition, Food and Beverage Policy

Dental Health

Links Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard 2011

Regs	77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
QA	2.1.3	Effective hygiene practices are promoted and implemented
	2.2.1	Healthy eating is promoted and food and drinks provided by the are nutritious and appropriate for each child

Sources

- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011.
- Guide to the National Quality Standard 2011.
- Queensland Health. Happy Teeth Resource Kit.
http://www.health.qld.gov.au/oralhealth/promo_programs/happy_teeth.asp accessed 6 February 2016

Further reading and useful websites

- Centre for Community Child Health – <http://www.rch.org.au/ccch/> accessed 6 February 2016
- Queensland Health. (2016). *Prevention and Promotion Programs and Resources*.
http://health.qld.gov.au/oralhealth/promo_programs/ accessed 6 February 2016
- Queensland Health – <http://www.health.qld.gov.au> accessed 6 February 2016
- The Royal Children’s Hospital Melbourne. *Childcare and children’s health: An information sheet for parents (Oral Health)* Vol 14 No 2 June 2011
http://www.rch.org.au/emplibrary/ccch/CCH_Fact_Sheet_-_Oral_health.pdf accessed 6 February 2016

Policy review

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur and any issues identified as part the Service’s commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

Date reviewed: May 2017

Next review Date: May 2018