

## DENTAL HYGIENE POLICY

### **Policy Statement:**

Did you know that, although tooth decay is preventable, approximately half of Queensland's children have experienced tooth decay by six years of age? The bad news is that dental disease can lead to severe pain and even disfigurement in some children. As parents and carers of young children, we want to make sure they stay healthy and happy. However, this is sometimes easier said than done. The fact is, learning healthy behaviours can be a complex process. Teaching and learning does not just occur in the classroom. Health messages taught through curriculum are either complemented or contradicted by practices occurring elsewhere in a child care facility or in the home. The trick is to make sure that messages are consistent in both settings.

We know that behaviours developed during childhood are often with us for life. We also know that, in order to prevent tooth decay and gum disease, it is essential that daily toothbrushing and healthy eating habits are established at an early age. In fact, most children have formed lifelong eating habits by school age. Since so many Australian children attend early childhood care prior to primary school, Little Saints is an ideal setting for reinforcing good health habits and attitudes.

([http://www.health.qld.gov.au/oralhealth/documents/ht\\_3\\_5.pdf](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/oralhealth/documents/ht_3_5.pdf))

### **Aims:**

To educate parents and children on ways to keep children's teeth healthy and clean.

To prevent early tooth decay by educating children and parents in the early years of children's life and to provide information from dental professionals.

### **Rationale:**

We have a duty of care to promote the health and wellbeing of children. Dental health care is important because inattention to this area can result in both immediate and long term harmful outcomes for children. Dental health care for younger children can also be underestimated due to the assumption that baby teeth are relatively unimportant as children lose these before their adult teeth erupt. Healthy baby teeth, however, contribute to the overall healthy development and wellbeing of children.

Effective dental and oral care is important for children's current and future health and wellbeing. Effective dental health for children is closely related to the development of healthy adult teeth.

Two major factors that affect dental health relate to:

- Dental care activities i.e. tooth brushing, visiting the dentist
- The types of food and drinks consumed and the ways these are consumed. For example the use of infant bottles with sweetened drinks or pacifiers (dummies) dipped in sweet substances.

At St Andrew's Little Saints we will endeavor to address these factors in a number of ways. Through our service's policies and procedures; through children's programmes and experiences and by providing up to date to information and support for families.

### **Strategies/Practices/Procedures:**

Staff will incorporate dental health education in the daily programme by use of real opportunities to discuss these issues with children. These discussions may be part of meal time routines, general hygiene routines, cooking activities, discussions about health and nutrition or discussions about home routines and lifestyles.

Group times and incidental learning opportunities will be used to cover curriculum areas of health and hygiene. Routine times such as meal and personal hygiene activities will be used to introduce songs, rhymes and simple conversations about dental health. Discussions about teeth and how to keep them healthy, good and bad foods and the importance of brushing and rinsing out their mouth after eating. These opportunities may constitute one off experiences or may lead to ongoing projects depending upon children's interests.

Dramatic or pretend play, as well as other creative activities such as drawing, painting or sculpting can also provide opportunities for learning about dental health for both older and younger children.

Children will be encouraged to drink water during the day and to rinse out their mouths after eating. Children are encouraged to rinse their mouth after meals using the "sip, swish and swallow" method.

Staff will provide information to parents on caring for their child's teeth. Pamphlets and flyers are available to families and parents. Written information provided for families should be translated into home language where possible and if necessary.

Dental professionals are invited to visit the centre to demonstrate and explain how to care for children's teeth, to educate children on keeping teeth healthy and show the proper way to brush teeth. When the dental van visits the College, a dental nurse will be invited to educate the children in correct toothbrushing and dental care. Information nights may be organised for parents who wish to learn more about dental care by a dental professional. The College nurse will also be available for these visits.

St Andrew's Little Saints follows and implements the guidelines provided by Queensland Health – Happy Teeth Programme.

### **Dental Emergency**

It is preferable that where possible dental accidents be minimised or avoided altogether. We will endeavour to achieve this through effective supervision and monitoring of safety and risks in the environment.

If a child's tooth is dislodged due to an accident, staff will endeavour to re-position the tooth in the socket and encourage the child to keep their mouth closed and bite down. If the tooth cannot be re-positioned into the socket, the tooth will be placed in milk. The child will be taken to the dentist immediately across the road at Peregrine Springs. Should this occur, the parent will be contacted to meet the child and staff member at the dentist.

### **Measuring Tools:**

Feedback given by staff

Director will monitor dental hygiene in the Centre by checking programming and referring to the guidelines provided by 'Happy Teeth – QLD Health'.

### **Sources & Further Reading:**

Queensland Health – Happy Teeth Programme

<http://www.health.qld.gov.au/oralhealth/default.asp>

[http://www.health.qld.gov.au/oralhealth/promo\\_programs/happy\\_teeth\\_manual.asp](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/oralhealth/promo_programs/happy_teeth_manual.asp)

### **Links to Other Policies:**

Hygiene Cleaning and Infection Control Policy

Nutrition, Food and Beverage Policy