

inspiring

Behind these smiles is a family who knows the value of good oral health



Healthy Families, Healthy Smiles Newsletter

Issue No.2, April 2013

Program launch brings smiles to mums and babies

It was smiles all around as the Hon. Wendy Lovell, Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, launched the Healthy Families, Healthy Smiles initiative on Friday 22 February.

The launch of *Healthy Families, Healthy Smiles* was celebrated with more than 60 project partners at a morning tea at The Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne, Carlton.

Mr Mick Ellis, Dental Health Services Victoria Board Chair, said the new program “exemplified what DHSV was all about – preventing dental decay, one of Victoria’s most prevalent health problems”.

Minister Lovell said the mothers and babies who attended the event served as a reminder of what the project is trying to achieve - engagement with health and early childhood professionals to prevent oral disease in the early stages.

“We want to make sure that smiles stay healthy during early childhood and pregnancy and the best way to do that is to start early,” Minister Lovell said.

At the launch, Minister Lovell and Mr Ellis presented certificates to midwives who participated in one of the initiative’s first projects - an online oral health education program. The midwives came from various health services across Victoria to accept their awards.



Read more about the launch and the program on the DHSV website: www.dhsv.org.au/news-stories/2013/02/22/all-smiles-at-healthy-families-healthy-smiles-launch/

DHSV is supported by the Victorian Department of Health to deliver *Healthy Families, Healthy Smiles*.

Pictured: Minister Lovell with (back row) Michaela and Jasper, Sally and Athertlie, (front row) Meagan and Eve, and Mandy and Bill at the program launch in February.

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Involving early childhood services

Early childhood professionals play an important role in preventing early childhood caries. Healthy Families, Healthy Smiles is working closely with the early childhood sector to embed oral health promotion into services for children 0-3 years.

Healthy Families, Healthy Smiles focuses on building the capacity of early childhood professionals who have regular contact with children 0 to 3 years of age and their families.

Current data shows that children are experiencing significant levels of early childhood caries (tooth decay) at very young ages despite this being entirely preventable.

Recently, the team invited key stakeholders to participate in an Early Childhood Oral Health Forum. The forum considered current data as well as the recommendations of the early childhood sector needs assessment. Two participatory sessions explored the challenges for early childhood professionals and services when incorporating oral health promotion into their work and how these might be overcome. The forum discussion identified that early childhood professionals may have limited confidence to discuss oral health with families as well as being influenced by their own beliefs and experiences.

Early childhood professionals also work with children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and this can be challenging in terms of health literacy. Recommendations included:

- Providing training and support
- Clear and simple key messages
- Linking oral health promotion with existing programs and policies.



To progress this work, two working groups will be convened. One will address training and support for early childhood professionals and services that align with the National Quality Standards (NQS) and the Victorian Prevention and Health Promotion Achievement Program. The other will focus on professionals working in supported playgroups and other similar services.

If you would like to hear more about work in the early childhood space or you are interested in being involved please contact Jo Payne at Dental Health Services Victoria on (03) 9341 1722 or email joanne.payne@dhsv.org.au.



Pictured: Mercy O'Connell nursing educator Siglinde Angerer and Tweddle staff identifying the key oral health promotion messages that can be incorporated into their services with families and children.

Baby teeth count too

A partnership with Early Parenting Centres will help families to look after their smiles.

The *Healthy Families, Healthy Smiles* Early Parenting Centres working group is developing a training package called 'Baby Teeth Count Too!' for staff working in Early Parenting Centres. These important services provide help and support for families with children aged 0 to 3 years who are experiencing difficulties such as establishing feeding or sleeping routines.

In late January, two of the four modules that make up the package were piloted with a group of 27 staff from Tweddle Child and Family Health Service. The two hour oral health workshop was part of their professional development program. Feedback from participants confirmed that 'Baby Teeth Count Too!' is on the right track in terms of the information included and the way the training is delivered.

The final two modules and facilitator's guide are currently being developed by the working group.

Midwives - Keeping smiles healthy through pregnancy

The pilot of an online oral health training package for midwives has shown promising results.

Twenty four midwives have successfully completed the Midwifery Initiated Oral Health Education Program, an online training package developed especially for midwives.

Evaluation of the Victorian pilot, assisted by DHSV's Australian Population Health Improvement Research Strategy for Oral Health (APHIRST-OH), has shown increases in knowledge and confidence which will support midwives to include oral health promotion in their practices.

Feedback from the participants confirmed that they recognise the important role they can play in promoting oral health with their clients and the training successfully increased knowledge and confidence around oral health during pregnancy, screening for oral health problems and referral to dental services.

“There are some real pearls of wisdom and it is so easily incorporated into your practice...”

- Participating midwife -

Midwives who completed the training were presented with a certificate of completion at the program launch. *Healthy Families, Healthy Smiles* will begin planning further opportunities for Victorian midwives to access this evidence based eLearning program.



Pictured: Dr Ajesh George who attended the program launch to represent the NSW partners: The Centre for Applied Nursing Research, University of Western Sydney, Sydney & South Western Sydney Local Health District and Ingham Institute Applied Medical Research, along with Dr Carole Gilmour, representing the Victorian Branch of the Australian College of Midwives, with midwives who successfully completed the training.

A healthy diet promotes healthy teeth

A healthy diet is vital for good oral health. The NHMRC and the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing recently released new guidelines to support maintenance of a healthy diet.



A healthy diet can help reduce the risk of diet-related conditions like dental decay. That's why DHSV sent submissions on healthy eating and its importance to oral health to the NHRMC and DoHA in response to the release of their *Infant Feeding Guidelines* and *Australian Dietary Guidelines* drafts.

The guidelines are useful for health professionals, policy makers, educators and researchers and the Healthy Families, Healthy Smiles team will be using them as they develop training packages for professionals promoting oral health with young families and pregnant women.

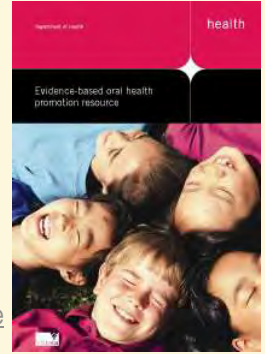
You can find the guidelines and more information at www.eatforhealth.gov.au.



Spotlight on: Evidence-based practice

The *Evidence-based oral health promotion resource* identifies the most effective strategies for prevention and is a useful resource for planning and policy development around oral health.

This systematic review of oral health promotion literature was released by the Department of Health in 2011 and is available online at: [http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/Evidence-based-oral-health-promotion-resource-\(2011\)](http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/Evidence-based-oral-health-promotion-resource-(2011))



Tooth packs update

The tooth packs trial will help determine whether providing toothbrushes and toothpaste to families improves brushing habits in children.

The Maternal and Child Health Services in four local government sites - Swan Hill, East Gippsland, Brimbank and Greater Dandenong - have completed the second round of distribution of tooth packs.

The services provided toothbrushes and toothpaste for family members of all visiting two-year-old children and gave families a fact sheet about looking after their mouths.

Families taking part in the study also completed a survey which the DHSV research team - Australian Population Health Improvement Research Strategy for Oral Health (APHIRST-OH) - will evaluate over the coming months. A follow up survey is planned for later this year and DHSV hopes that the tooth packs will improve tooth brushing habits.

The preliminary results of the Tooth Packs survey will be presented to the Australian Association of Maternal, Child and Family Health Nurses at their fifth Biennial Conference in Canberra (9-11 May 2013).

The first round of the study saw the same products given out at the 18-month visit and results show:

- 815 families were seen.
- Approximately 2700 toothbrush and 2000 toothpaste packs were distributed.
- 39% of participants did not speak English at home.
- 92% of participants reported they had received information about oral health from their MCH nurse and 83% of these people found it useful.
- 61% felt confident to clean their child's mouth/teeth.
- 55% of participants believed you should start brushing as soon as the first tooth arrives.

Working together to improve oral health

A new action guide will help local governments to improve the oral health of their communities.

All Victorians should be able to eat and socialise without the pain, discomfort or embarrassment that often comes from poor oral health and to help ensure this is the case, DHSV and the Victorian Department of Health have teamed up to develop a local government action guide for improving oral health and preventing oral disease in the community.

The guide outlines a range of evidence-informed actions for councils to consider when preparing their *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans*, *Municipal Early Years Plans* and other strategies.

For more information about the guides visit www.health.vic.gov.au/localgov/resources.htm

For more information about any of the Healthy Families, Healthy Smiles activities please contact:

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