

# healthyfamilies healthysmiles

Issue No 14 May 2018

## Gaps in children's oral health

**Results from the latest RCH National Child Health Poll shows that many parents, despite meaning well, are confused about how best to keep their child's teeth healthy.**

The poll, a survey of Australian parents, found:

- One in three (31%) preschoolers have never visited a dentist
- One in three Australian children do not brush their teeth twice a day
- Almost half of parents (48%) don't know that tap water, which contains fluoride, is better for teeth than bottled water
- Half of parents (49%) do not know that there might be free dental services available for their child

These findings highlight the need to make sure all parents have access to the right information and support to make healthy choices for their child's oral health from birth.

Professionals who are in regular contact with young children can play a role in helping to build awareness



RCH National Child Health Poll [www.rchpoll.org.au/](http://www.rchpoll.org.au/)

about the importance of oral health from infancy.

Share some simple information with families and supporting them to develop good dental health habits. Simple steps include brushing teeth twice a day, visiting the dentist for a checkup, choosing healthy snacks, and drinking tap water instead of sugary drinks, will help protect children's teeth and prevent tooth decay.

Healthy Families, Healthy Smiles offers Professional Development for professionals and resources to share with families.

Find Fact Sheets at [www.dhsv.org.au/professionals/health-promotion-resources/fact-sheets-and-tip-cards](http://www.dhsv.org.au/professionals/health-promotion-resources/fact-sheets-and-tip-cards)

For information about workshops contact

### In this issue...

Child oral health .....	1	Little Koorie Smiles .....	3
Is your child old enough to brush their own teeth .....	2	Albury Wodonga Health Service .....	3
Helping families choose the right toothpaste .....	2	Spotlight on .....	4

# Kids need help until around 7 or 8

Helping children to get in the habit of brushing twice a day sets up a good habit for life.

As soon as the first tooth comes through, parents can start brushing. When children are around 2 or 3 years old, start to teach them how to brush and care for their teeth. Encouraging them to brush their own teeth is great! — but they still need adult help until around 8 years of age.

Many parents are surprised to hear this! You might have heard parents say,

*My child knows how to do it*

*My child does not want me to brush his/her teeth*

*I want my child to be independent*



The reason is, it is difficult for young children to brush their teeth properly. They usually do not have the manual skills to clean all the hard to reach areas, such as the top and bottom molars at the back of the mouth.

Encourage children to do some of the brushing themselves to help develop the skills. It's great practice. But until around 7 or 8 years of age, around the time they

can tie a shoe lace, toothbrushing should be a combined effort. Make sure an adult also helps to brush their teeth before or after.

Find resources to share with parents on **How to brush your child's teeth** [www.dhsv.org.au/dental-health/general-dental-advice/children3/how-to-brush-your-childs-teeth](http://www.dhsv.org.au/dental-health/general-dental-advice/children3/how-to-brush-your-childs-teeth)

## Choosing the right children's toothpaste

Choosing which toothpaste to use can seem a bit complicated. There is a range of toothpastes available that contain different levels of fluoride.

Children need to use toothpaste that has the right amount of fluoride for their age.

### Age: 0 – 18 months

- Toothpaste is not recommended at this age

### Age: 18 months – 5 years

- Low fluoride toothpaste (contains 400-550 ppm Fluoride)
- Use a small pea-sized amount
- Children should spit out, not swallow, and not rinse

### Age: 6 years

- Standard fluoride toothpaste (contains 1000 ppm Fluoride)

- Use a small pea-sized amount
- Children should spit out, not swallow, and not rinse

Remember toothpaste is not recommended under 18 months of age.

Some toothpaste packaging can be misleading. Companies are in the business of selling their products. Their packaging is designed to appeal to children.



The amount of fluoride that's in the toothpaste can be found on the side of the tube and is measured in parts per million (ppm) Fluoride.

### In a non-fluoridated area?

If children live in an area with no fluoride in their drinking water, suggest to families they talk to their dentist or other oral health professional about the right toothpaste to use.

# Little Koorie Smiles

## New resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families

**Little Koorie Smiles** was produced collaboratively by DHSV with VACCHO for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Little Koorie Smiles encourages a family-centred approach. It is designed to support playgroup facilitators to engage with children, families and their community about dental health and the healthy habits that prevent tooth decay and keep teeth strong and healthy.

A flipchart supports conversations with families about good dental health.

An Activity Kit includes easy-to-use activities, storybook ideas and songs that encourage children and parents to learn together in a playful way.

We would like to acknowledge and thank VACCHO for sharing their knowledge and wisdom and also

Yappera Children's Services and families for their support in the development of this project. Thanks also to VACCA's (Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency) Koorie Kids Playgroups who piloted the materials and provided valuable feedback.

Little Koorie Smiles is adapted from the Baby teeth count too! flipchart and was made possible through the Healthy Families, Healthy Smiles initiative with funding from the Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services.

If you work with Aboriginal families and would like more information, contact

Robyn Alexander  
Health Promotion Officer  
[robyn.alexander@dhsv.org.au](mailto:robyn.alexander@dhsv.org.au)



### Little Koorie Smiles artwork

The artwork represents the Aboriginal community across Victoria. The circles represent the different communities and clans that make up Victoria.

Thanks to artist Gary Saunders (Bangerang, Wiradjuri, Dja Dja Wurrung)

# Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service



AWAHS staff attending Bigger Better Smiles oral health workshop

## Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service builds oral health capacity amongst its staff through Bigger Better Smiles

As the result of the strong backing by David Noonan, the chief Executive Officer, the senior management team and the organising work of two oral health therapists from the dental team Claire Stokes and Mia Owczarek, a whole of organisation oral health professional development day was offered at AWAHS on the 22nd February.

The twenty two staff members, who participated in Bigger Better Smiles, were from Medical/ Nursing, Health Promotion, Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Dental divisions. Plus a staff member from a partner organisation, Gateway Health also attended.

Some great ideas were generated from the participants on how to strengthen oral health within their roles

- Incorporate 'Lift the lip' into normal appointments

- Produce a rap song about teeth with the community
- Try to address the problem of cheap cola being available in the community
- Ask 'how are your teeth' when clients attend for other reasons
- Use a mouth model (toothbrushing demonstration model) as a prompt to start a conversation.

Healthy Families Healthy Smiles wishes AWAHS all the best in their efforts to keep oral health on the agenda within their community.

## Spotlight on:

### Kids and food: Challenges



You might also be interested in the Royal Children's Hospital's National Child Health Poll about children's nutrition (December 2017).

#### Find the Kids and food poll here

Kids and food: Challenges families face

[www.rchpoll.org.au/polls/kids-and-food-challenges-families-face/](http://www.rchpoll.org.au/polls/kids-and-food-challenges-families-face/)

## get in touch

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

#### Allison Ridge

Manager - Health Promotion Programs

P: 03 9341 1144

E: [allison.ridge@dhsv.org.au](mailto:allison.ridge@dhsv.org.au)

#### Gillian Lang

Health Promotion Officer

P: 03 9341 1162

E: [gillian.lang@dhsv.org.au](mailto:gillian.lang@dhsv.org.au)

#### Robyn Alexander

Health Promotion Officer

P: 03 9341 1722

E: [robyn.alexander@dhsv.org.au](mailto:robyn.alexander@dhsv.org.au)

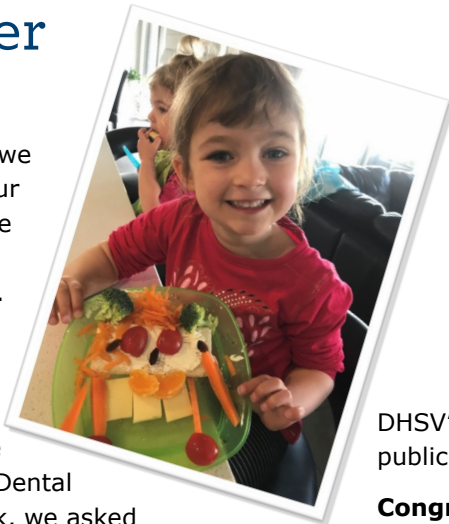
## Biggest Little Smiles winner

In our last newsletter, we promoted our Biggest Little Smiles competition.

As part of a launch at Werribee Open Range Zoo during Dental Health Week, we asked parents to send in photos of their children that show our key messages: Eat well, Drink well and Clean well.

Here's the Biggest Little Smiles winner, Isabelle Hutchinson from Ballarat. Isabelle's winning entry was announced at the DHSV's Annual General Meeting.

Isabelle won an annual Zoos Victoria membership for her family and an off-road safari tour at the Werribee Open Range Zoo.



## Congratulations

### Stacey Brown, Yappera Children's Service

DHSV's Public Oral Health Awards honour dedicated professionals in Victoria's public dental sector.

#### **Congratulations to Stacey Brown, Yappera Children's Service, the winner of the 2017 Community Oral Health Champion Award.**

This award recognises individuals for their contribution to the Victorian public oral health sector, through a volunteer capacity or in partnership with DHSV staff.

Stacey is the CEO at Yappera Children's Service, an Aboriginal community controlled, governed and managed Multi functional Aboriginal Children's Service.

Stacey is a passionate advocate for the health and wellbeing of children and families, championing oral health and embedding it into Yappera's daily routines. She recognises the importance of Yappera's staff being able to promote dental health and allocates time for staff to participate in oral health and nutrition training.