

Healthy Little Smiles at Storytime

Talking about toothbrushing



Read a Book



Puppet Play



Create and Learn



Sing a Song



Share with Families

Tooth decay in early childhood is a significant problem in the Victorian community. Oral Health Victoria (OHV) recognises the unique opportunity that libraries have to build oral health literacy with young children and their families, particularly through themed Storytime sessions.

Stories, songs, puppets and crafts can help to make brushing teeth fun for young children. Through engaging in the activities together, families can learn to develop habits that contribute to strong teeth and healthy smiles.

Here’s how you can talk with children and their families about teeth at Storytime.

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1

Talking About Toothbrushing at Storytime

As you prepare to talk to families about brushing teeth, take a look at these resources that families can take home after the Storytime session to reinforce the messages.

The decal (or downloadable A4 poster) uses child-friendly cues such as, “Open wide and roar like a lion!” to help children participate in brushing.



How to brush your child's teeth

A4 handout
Translations available



Let's brush!

A4 poster with child-friendly brushing instructions



Talking points for children

As you talk to the children together with their family members or caregivers, here are some suggested talking points.

Today we're going to talk about brushing teeth. Brushing can be fun! We'll read a story, sing a song, and we'll brush Chomper's teeth!

Our teeth do important jobs. We use our teeth to talk, eat and smile! So we brush our teeth twice a day to keep them healthy.

Teeth can get sick. It's important we look after our teeth.

A grown-up helps you brush the tricky bits.

We brush our teeth with fluoride toothpaste to keep them clean, strong and healthy.

We brush in circles and back-and-forth. We brush inside and outside, top and bottom.

Brushing our teeth is something we do everyday. We brush our teeth every morning and every night before bed. It is part of our morning and bedtime routine.

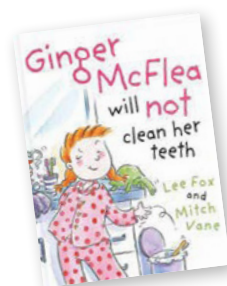
We spit out the toothpaste bubbles after we finish brushing, but we don't rinse with water.

2

Read a Book



It wouldn't be Storytime without a storybook or two!
Here are some suggestions.

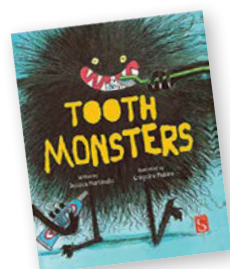


Ginger McFlea will not Clean her Teeth
Lee Fox

Age: 3-5 years

Tooth Monsters
Jessica Martinello

Age: 3-6 years

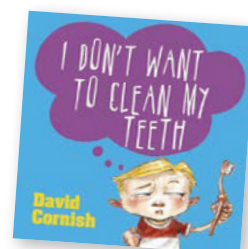


Vlad's Bad Breath
Rory H. Mather and Jesus Lopez

Age: 3-8 years

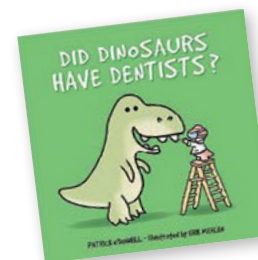
I Don't Want to Clean My Teeth
David Cornish

Age: 3-8 years



We have selected stories with the aim of fostering a positive attitude about teeth and taking care of them. We have tried to avoid books that refer to pain with tooth decay (cavities), fillings or having teeth removed, as well as books that portray dental check-ups as scary.

We want to share positive messages that encourage children to take increasing responsibility in behaviours such as brushing teeth twice a day and having regular dental check-ups.

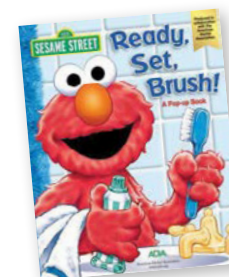
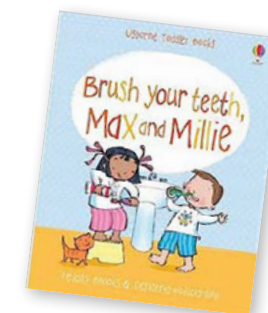


Did Dinosaurs have Dentists?
Patrick O'Donnell

Age: 8-12 years

Brush Your Teeth, Max and Millie*
Felicity Brooks

Age: 2-4 years

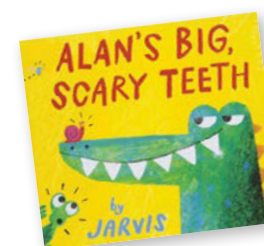


Ready, Set, Brush! (Sesame Street)
Matt Mitter

Age: 2-5 years

When a Dragon Comes to Stay
Caryl Hart

Age: 2-5 years

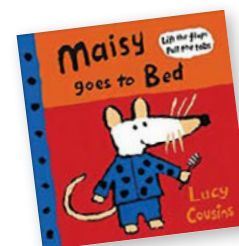
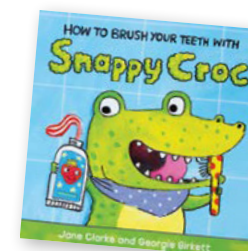


Alan's Big Scary Teeth
Jarvis

Age: 3-5 years

How to Brush Your Teeth with Snappy Croc*
Jane Clarke and illustrated by Georgie Birkett

Age: baby-1 year

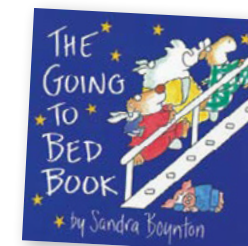


Maisy Goes to Bed
Lucy Cousins

Age: 3-5 years

The Going to Bed Book
Sandra Boynton

Age: Baby-5 years



Note: Some books mention rinsing your mouth with water after brushing. Australian guidelines recommend that after brushing, you spit the toothpaste out but **don't rinse with water**. This allows a layer of fluoride toothpaste to sit on the teeth for longer, increasing protection against decay.



3

Puppet Play

Demonstrating toothbrushing might sound intimidating at first, but we have resources to help you, such as the Let's Brush! poster.

Watch a video of a Storytime facilitator demonstrating the four steps of brushing on YouTube (scan the QR code on page 7) and practise on your own to build your confidence.



Let's brush!

A4 poster with child-friendly brushing instructions



Materials



- ★ Regular or children's toothbrush (use this for the brushing demonstration)
- ★ Chomper toothbrushing puppet and jumbo toothbrush (children can use this to brush Chomper's teeth after the demonstration)

Preparation

- Scan the QR code to watch Tash and Chomper demonstrate the 4 steps of toothbrushing... or [click here](#).
- A **Let's brush!** decal for each family (or download and print a poster for each family – see page 6.)



Talking points

- ★ Brushing your teeth helps keep them clean and healthy.
- ★ We brush our teeth every morning and every night before bed.
- ★ What are we doing when we brush our teeth? (Brushing the germs and small pieces of food off our teeth.)
- ★ I wonder what would happen if we didn't brush our teeth?

Method

After reading books and talking about brushing teeth, demonstrate how to brush with Chomper the puppet. (Follow along with the Let's brush! poster - it's a helpful cheat sheet!)

"Children need a **soft** children's toothbrush with a small head."

"From 18 months of age, add some **children's toothpaste with fluoride** to your brush. Fluoride helps keep teeth strong. You only need a little bit – about the size of a pea."

1. We start by brushing the **outside** of our teeth.
Make a big smile like a monkey.
We brush all our teeth and gums by moving the brush in **circles**.
Circles on the top and circles on the bottom.
2. Next we brush the **insides** of our teeth.
Open wide and roar like a lion.
We brush all our teeth and gums by moving the brush in **circles**.
Circles on the **top** and circles on the **bottom**.
3. Then we brush the **back** teeth – that's where the food gets stuck and germs hide.
Remember to keep roaring like a lion!
We brush our back teeth by moving the toothbrush **back-and-forth**.
Back-and-forth on the **top** and back-and-forth on the **bottom**.
4. And to finish, we **spit out** the toothpaste bubbles.
We don't swallow and we don't rinse with water. The little bit of fluoride toothpaste left on our teeth helps to keep them strong.



4

Sing a Song

This is the Way We Brush Our Teeth
(Sing to the tune of "Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush")

This is the way I brush my teeth
Brush my teeth, brush my teeth
This is the way I brush my teeth
So early in the morning.
This is the way my toothbrush goes
Round and round, round and round
This is the way my toothbrush goes
So early in the morning.

Substitute your own words for additional verses:

"This is the way I brush in the back, brush in the back."

"This is the way I brush over my tongue, over my tongue."

Here are a few simple songs about brushing teeth. Use actions wherever possible to increase engagement.



Brush, Brush, Brush Your Teeth

(Sing to the tune of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat")

Brush, brush, brush your teeth
Gently round your gums.
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,
Brushing is such fun!!
Brush, brush, brush your teeth
Brush them every day.
The front, the sides, the back, the top
To keep decay (or the bugs or germs) away!



Brushing Song

(Sing to the tune of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star")

Got my toothpaste, got my brush
I won't hurry, I won't rush.
Making sure my teeth are clean
Front and back and in between.
When I brush for quite a while
I will have a happy smile!



For more song ideas, visit the [Healthy Little Smiles webpage](#).



Choose a hands-on learning activity from the following pages that children can do with their family member or caregiver.

Brush off monsters



In this hands-on activity we encourage children's curiosity and exploration about why we brush our teeth, as well as rehearsing cues for brushing and practising fine motor skills (circles, back-and-forth, top and bottom).

Talking points

- ★ **What are we doing when we brush our teeth?** (Brushing the germs and small pieces of food off our teeth.)
- ★ **Brushing your teeth with toothpaste makes your teeth strong and healthy – and you only need a little bit. Spit out the toothpaste after you finish brushing.**

Materials

- ★ **Picture of teeth** Laminated
- ★ Whiteboard markers
- ★ Toothbrushes

Preparation

1. Download and print picture of teeth and laminate (or slide into a plastic pocket/envelope)
2. Draw funny-looking germ (bacteria) monsters on teeth with whiteboard markers



Method

Children brush off germ-monsters with a toothbrush. Guide them to brush in circles, back-and-forth, top and bottom.



Download
Picture of teeth
template for
each child



Bedtime routine chart



Routines help children understand and get ready for daily activities. Including toothbrushing in the morning and bedtime routine helps children understand that brushing is a part of daily life.

Creating a bedtime routine chart together provides an opportunity for families to talk about the steps to get ready for bed, and helps children feel involved and familiar with their bedtime routine.

Materials

- ★ **This is How I Get Ready for Bed** template (download below)
- ★ **This is How I Get Ready for Bed** sticker sheets or cut-out pictures (download below)
- ★ Scissors and glue (not needed for stickers)
- ★ Markers/crayons/pencils for drawing (adding bedtime routine steps not pictured) and for writing times (optional step)

Method

1. Ask children and their families to work together to identify the steps they take to get ready for bed. Don't forget brushing teeth!
2. Children can cut out the relevant pictures, or draw their own.
3. Stick or draw the images on the template in the right order. Families might like to add a time for each step, working backwards from bedtime.

There is only space for six steps, so some families will need to be selective. Others may use fewer steps.

Preparation



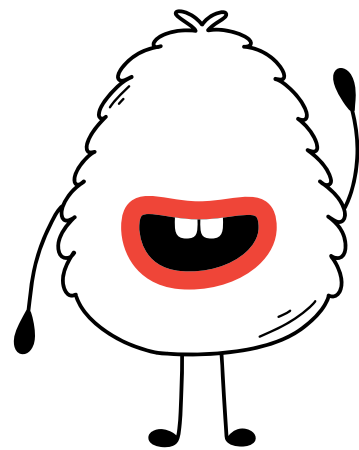
Download
This is How I Get Ready for Bed
template and
cut-out pictures



Talking points

- ★ **What are the things you do every night that help you get ready for bed and have a good night's sleep?**
- ★ **When do you brush your teeth?**
- ★ **Who do you say goodnight to every night?**

Create-a-Monster



Use these monsters to bring attention to teeth and start a conversation about the important jobs our teeth do and why we need to take care of them.

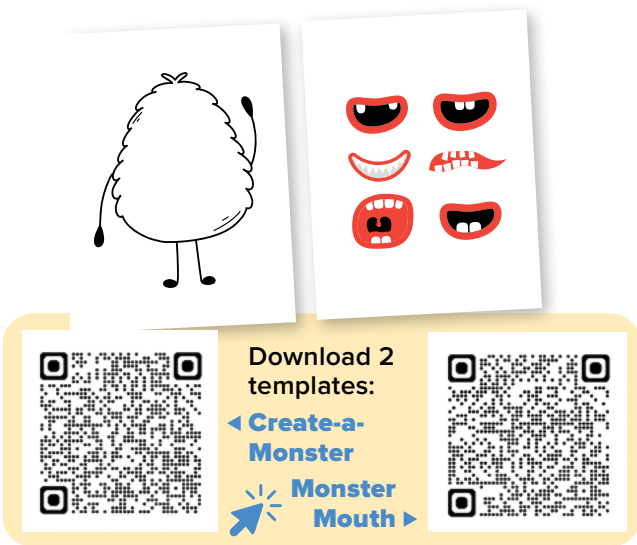
Print the monster templates:

- Print the monster outline in black and white, and print the monster mouths in colour
- **OR** print both pages in black and white and let the children colour them
- **OR** print only the monster outline and let the children draw their own eyes and mouths *with teeth*.

Materials

- ★ **Create-a-Monster** template
- ★ **Pick a monster mouth** template
- ★ Markers for colouring
- ★ Scissors
- ★ Glue and/or sticky-tape

Preparation



Method

Make a fun monster with teeth! Children cut and paste (or draw) mouths and teeth on the monster body. They can then add more details to make their monster “come alive”.

Talking points

- ★ **These monsters have lost their teeth! Let’s give them some.**
- ★ **Why might this monster need teeth?** (To eat, talk and smile)
- ★ **Why do we need teeth?** (To eat, talk and smile.)
- ★ **You will have 20 teeth by the time you are 3 or 4 years old. How many teeth does your monster have?**

Self-portraits



As children get to know their bodies and how they work, it’s a great time to help them learn how to care for their bodies.

Encourage young children to explore and investigate the different parts of their head - the ears, eyes, nose and mouth - and talk about what these body parts do.

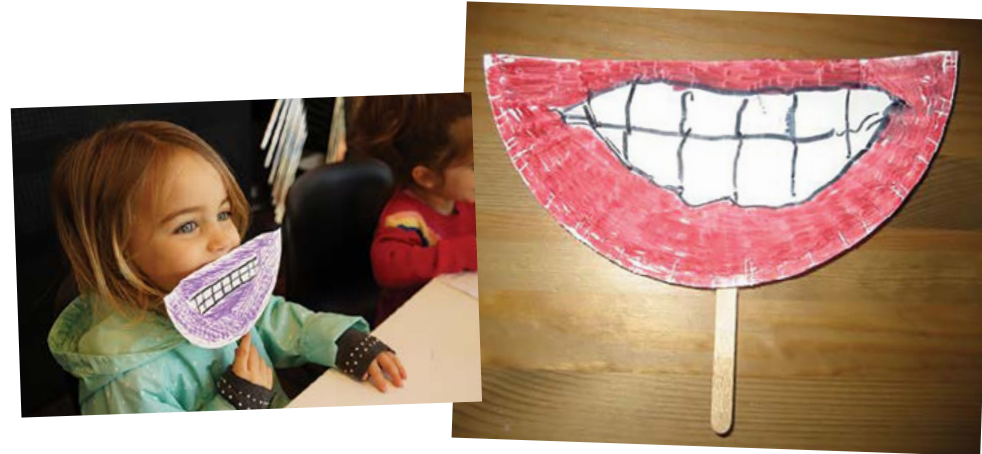
Method

Ask children to draw their face. Let children add features such as ears, eyes, nose and mouth by painting, drawing or sticking on other materials.

Talking points

- ★ **What do you do with your mouth?** (Repeat with nose, eyes, ears.)
- ★ **What can you see when you smile?** (Teeth, gums.) **What makes you smile?**
- ★ **Teeth have three important jobs - they help us eat, talk and smile.**
- ★ **Teeth are an important part of our bodies. There are lots of things we can do to look after our teeth, like brushing them in the morning and at night before bed, eating healthy foods and drinking tap water.**

Silly Smile mask



As children get to know their bodies and how they work, it's a great time to help them learn how to care for their bodies.

Encourage young children to explore and investigate the different parts of their mouth - and talk about what these body parts do.

Materials

- ★ Paper plates cut in half - a half plate for each child
- ★ Markers, crayons, pencils for drawing
- ★ Icy pole sticks or wooden stir sticks
- ★ Glue and/or sticky-tape

Method

Ask children to draw their silly smile with the teeth showing. Let children draw the lips and teeth... maybe even a tongue! To finish, stick the icy pole stick to the back as a handle.

Talking points

- ★ **What can you see when you smile?** (Teeth, gums.) **What makes you smile?**
- ★ **Teeth have three important jobs - they help us eat, talk and smile.**
- ★ **Teeth are an important part of our bodies. There are lots of things we can do to look after our teeth, like brushing them in the morning and at night before bed, eating healthy foods and drinking tap water.**

6

Share with Families



Find all the **Healthy Little Smiles** resources here



Here are a few of our take-home resources for families.



Find OHV's **full resource library** here



6 Tips to Help Kids Brush – A4

On the front are six hints to help motivate reluctant brushers, and QR codes to two helpful videos for toothbrushing with young children. On the back are some recommended apps, songs (with videos) and storybooks about toothbrushing.



It's fun to brush – A4 toothbrushing chart

Brushing charts help make brushing a fun and positive experience for kids - and act as a handy reminder for parents to say "well done" for brushing!



Deadly Tooth Tips – A4 trifold

The Deadly Tooth Tips artwork, designed by Aboriginal artist, Madison Connors, features animal ambassadors to represent key oral health messages.

The names of the animal ambassadors honour the language of the Yorta Yorta people: Wala (water), Dhuna (eat) and Dirran (teeth).



Why talk about toothbrushing at Storytime?

Good habits start in childhood

Keeping children's teeth healthy is an essential part of keeping their whole bodies well, and gives them what they need to enjoy a lifetime of decay-free teeth and bright, healthy smiles.

Australia's oral health guidelines tell us that practising healthy habits – like brushing teeth, having regular dental check-ups, and choosing healthy foods and drinks – is the best way to keep teeth healthy and prevent tooth decay.

Skill development

Learning to take care of themselves is an important and exciting part of childhood. When children learn new skills they build independence and their confidence grows.

Using child-friendly cues and actions, we can support children to start learning the skills they need to take an active role in toothbrushing.

Routines

Routines help children know what to expect and when to expect it. Making toothbrushing part of the family's morning and bedtime routines helps children understand that brushing teeth is something we do every day.

Talking about their bedtime routine – the regular activities that help them get ready for bed and a good night's sleep – helps children feel involved.

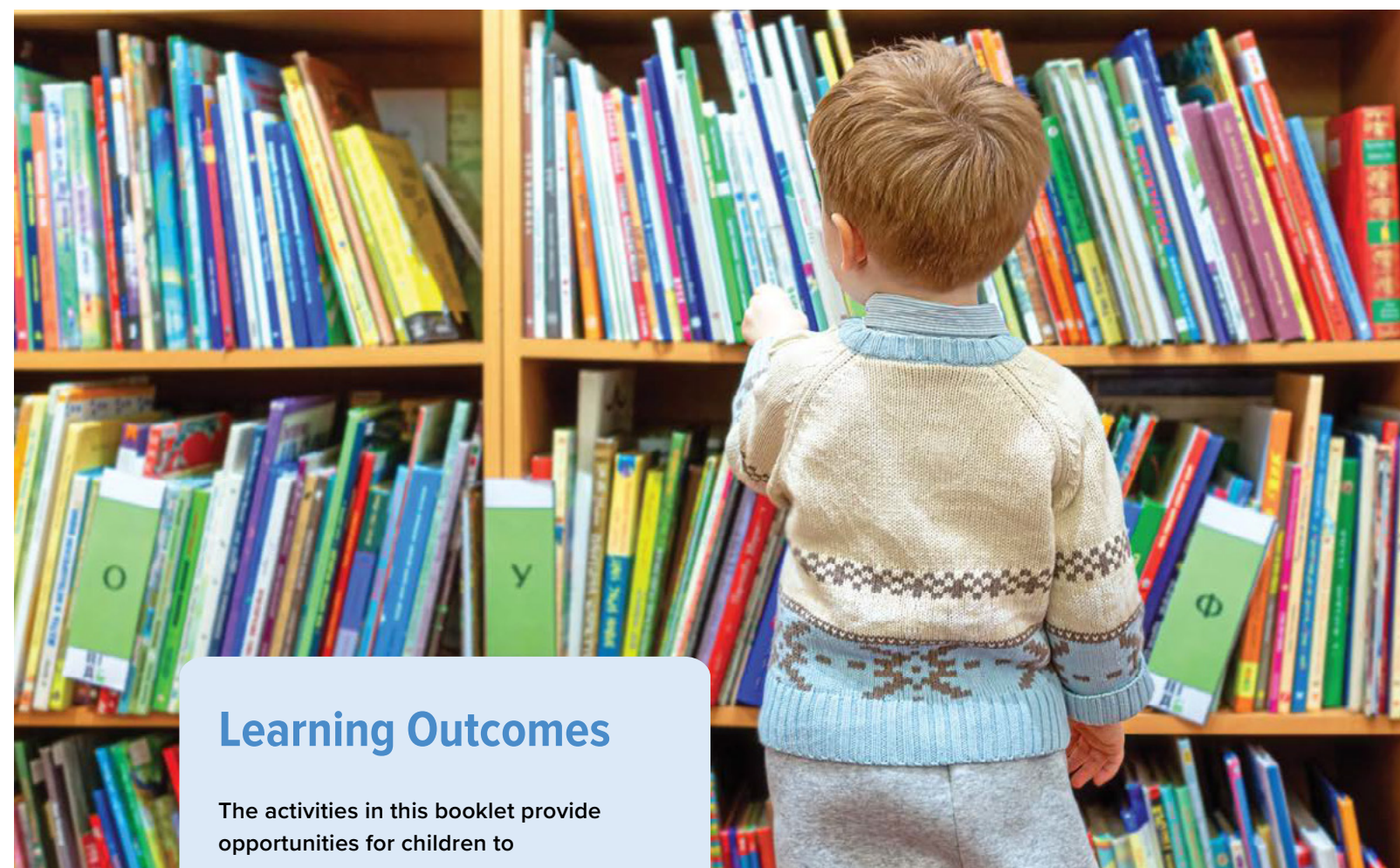


Keep it positive

Storytime facilitators can help make brushing teeth fun. Reframing everyday oral health practices as fun activities will help engage children and foster learning.

Stories and conversations about teeth can help children become familiar with toothbrushing, and develop a positive attitude toward it. This is an important step in establishing lifelong healthy habits.

Modelling a positive attitude about brushing can help parents and caregivers learn how to keep the fun going at home.



Learning Outcomes

The activities in this booklet provide opportunities for children to

- become familiar with cues and actions that allow them to take an active role in brushing their teeth
- build a sense of agency by encouraging children to take increasing responsibility in basic health routines
- practise toothbrushing techniques, helping to develop fine motor skills (moving toothbrush in small circles and back-and-forth)
- establish the habit of brushing their teeth morning and night.

VEYLDF LO3: Wellbeing - Children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing

Department of Education and Training & Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority 2016, Victorian early years learning and development framework: for all children from birth to eight years, Department of Education and Training, Melbourne.

For more information

Better Health Channel

Toothbrushing:
0 to 6 years



Raising Children
Network

From [homepage](#)
search for
"dental care"



Healthy Little Smiles at Storytime was developed by Oral Health Victoria (OHV), the leading public oral health agency in Victoria, in collaboration with a number of key early childhood organisations, early childhood professionals, supported playgroup facilitators and families.

The Healthy Families, Healthy Smiles initiative is funded by the Victorian Government.

The oral health information is based on the evidence-based *Oral Health Messages for Australia – a National Consensus Statement*. The information relates to young children, from birth to 5 years, and represents the most up to date recommendations in Australia.

Healthy Little Smiles at Storytime is informed by the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF), the state's framework that describes the principles, practices and outcomes that support and enhance young children's learning from birth to five years of age.

This document describes the generally accepted knowledge at the time of publication. It is only a guide and is a general summary of early childhood oral health knowledge. Readers are encouraged to update their knowledge on early childhood oral health through a continued partnership with the Oral Health Victoria Population Health Team.

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