

## Background

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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. Keeping healthy primary (baby) teeth until they fall out naturally is crucial in maintaining the space for permanent (adult) teeth.

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

## Policy statement

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The Service promotes good dental habits and is also committed to minimizing 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

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- The *Dental Health Policy* is explained to parents when they enrol their child in the Service, and their attention is specifically drawn to their responsibilities under this policy. Information relating to dental health is also included in the Parent Handbook given to all parents.
- The oral health message is promoted amongst families through notice boards, newsletters, information nights, verbal communication, parent-educator meetings, pamphlets, and dental health educational materials such as Happy Teeth (Queensland Health), and the celebration of Dental Awareness Month. Due consideration is given to home languages.
- 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.
- Children are given water when thirsty, and unflavoured milk when hungry.
- For parents providing food they are asked to provide healthy foods in their children's lunchboxes, particularly fruit and vegetables for morning and afternoon tea. Foods high in sugar in children's lunchboxes are returned home, and educators may suggest alternatives.
- Children are encouraged to drink water and rinse their mouth using the '*Swish and Swallow*' process after eating.
- 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 Services resources include plastic 'healthy food,' and toys and dolls with teeth. When appropriate to children's interest and the program, educator's 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.

- 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.

## Additional safe practices for babies (0-2yrs)

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- Mothers are encouraged and supported to breastfeed.
- Only milk or water is used in baby bottles.
- If parents request a pacifier (dummy) to be used, educators try to minimize its use. Pacifiers are stored in clear labeled containers when not required. Honey, sweetener, or any other substances are not used on pacifiers.
- Jam and honey are not served to children under 12 months of age.
- Fluids may be introduced in a cup from 6 months of age.
- Parents are encouraged to introduce solids from 6 months of age, as solids satisfy the child's hunger requiring fewer bottle feeds.
- 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.

## Responsibilities of parents

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- To provide nutritious foods and drinks according to information contained in the *Dental Health Policy* and in the *Nutrition, Food and Beverages – Service Provided and Parent Provided Policies*. Food and drinks brought from home should be nutritious, provide variety and follow current dietary guidelines.

## Procedure and forms

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- N/A

## Links to other policies

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- Food Preparation, Storage and Handling Policy
- Nutrition, Food and Beverages – Service Provided Policy
- Nutrition, Food and Beverages – Parent Provided Policy

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

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Regs	77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
QA	2.1.2	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented
	2.1.3	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child

## Sources

- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Guide to the National Quality Standard 2020
- Queensland Health – Happy Teeth Program: <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/public-health/topics/oral-health/resources/happy-teeth-program> (accessed 25 June 2025)
- Queensland Health – Happy Teeth Resource Kit: [https://www.health.qld.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/1130717/happy-teeth-manual-web.pdf](https://www.health.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/1130717/happy-teeth-manual-web.pdf) (accessed 25 June 2025)

## Further reading and useful websites

- Centre for Community Child Health – <http://www.rch.org.au/ccch/> (accessed 25 June 2025)
- Queensland Government. (2023). *Oral health for babies and toddlers (0-2 years)* <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/staying-healthy/oral-health/information-for/babies-and-toddlers> (accessed 25 June 2025)
- Queensland Health – <http://www.health.qld.gov.au> (accessed 25 June 2025)

## 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.

## Version Control

Version	Date Reviewed	Approved By	Comments/Amendments	Next Review Date
1	8 January 2018	Kaylene Harper	Updated to changed NQF requirements 1 February 2018. Service to modify policies to its specific needs.	January 2019
2	6 February 2019	Kaylene Harper	Accessed sources and further readings.	February 2020
3	29 January 2020	Kaylene Harper	Accessed sources and further readings.	January 2021
4	14 October 2020	Kaylene Harper	Reviewed policy. Accessed sources and further readings.	October 2021
5	22 September 2021	Kaylene Harper	Reviewed policy	September 2022
6	5 October 2022	Linda Hollard	Reviewed policy Accessed sources and further information	October 2023
7	22 August 2023	Grace McKinstry	Reviewed policy. Accessed sources and further readings.	August 2024
8	9 July 2024	Tiffany Boeske	Reviewed policy Accessed sources	July 2025
9	25 June 2025	Gen Mahaki	Reviewed policy. Accessed sources and further readings.	June 2026