

# CLEAN WELL

## FACT SHEET FOR PARENTS

***Thorough tooth cleaning with the correct technique is required for the maintenance of healthy teeth and gums. Good oral hygiene at an early age will reduce the likelihood of gum disease later in life. Encourage your child to clean his/her teeth at least twice a day - after meals and before bed. Most children do not have the coordination to use a toothbrush properly before the age of six or seven. Therefore, you should assist your young child to brush.***

### **Dental decay**

Dental decay is a diet related infectious disease and is the most common disease affecting teeth. Dental decay is caused by the interaction of sugar and plaque to produce acids. Acids dissolve the enamel (outer) layer of the tooth. These acids are produced by bacteria in plaque which develops after eating sugars commonly found in food.

### **Plaque**

Throughout the day, a sticky, soft film forms on teeth. This contains a large variety of bacteria together with a certain amount of food by-products and saliva. It needs to be removed each day to prevent tooth decay and gum problems. Regular brushing will help remove and prevent the build up of plaque.

### **Gum Disease**

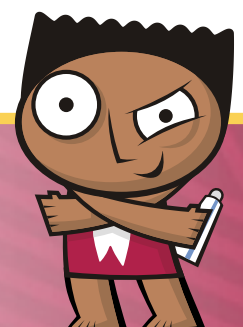
Gingivitis (inflammation of the gums) is caused by plaque build up on and between the teeth and is relatively common in children. Like dental decay, gingivitis is totally preventable with good oral hygiene practices.

Periodontal (gum) disease is a condition which usually begins in adolescence and may increase in severity through early adulthood and into middle age. Periodontal disease is caused by particular bacteria in plaque that accumulate on teeth at the gum line. These bacteria produce toxins that seep down between the gum and tooth, irritating the gum tissues and causing them to become reddened, inflamed and to bleed. If plaque is not cleaned away, the toxins may gradually destroy the fibres and bone which holds the teeth in place. This eventually leads to the loosening of teeth. In children, gum disease is usually preventable and/or reversible.

### **Who to ask for more information**

- ★ Dentist, Dental Therapist or Dental Hygienist
- ★ Maternal and Child Health Nurse
- ★ Family Doctor
- ★ Primary School Nurse

**BRUSHBOY™**



## Primary and Permanent teeth

Primary (baby) teeth are important for many reasons. They affect how your child smiles, speaks, eats food and perceives him/herself. This perception can also affect self esteem. For these reasons and because decay in primary teeth can mean that your child may develop decay in permanent (adult) teeth, it is important that they adopt good oral care habits early in life. Your child's primary teeth will fall out and be replaced with permanent teeth between the ages of 6 and 12 years.

## Brushing technique

1. Smear a pea-sized amount of toothpaste onto a small head, soft toothbrush. Use low fluoride toothpaste (2-6 years of age) unless otherwise recommended by a dental professional.



2. Aim the toothbrush bristles at an angle towards the gum line.

3. Gently jiggle the brush and move it in small circles over the teeth and gums.



4. Repeat for inside surfaces of all teeth.

5. For chewing surfaces, use a light back and forth motion.



6. Children should be encouraged to spit out the toothpaste after brushing.

## Make brushing fun

The key to getting your child to brush is to make it enjoyable. Start your routine today and look for ways to engage your children in the activity. Make brushing a fun thing to do rather than a chore which must be done.

## Fluoride toothpaste

Fluoride toothpaste makes teeth more resistant to the acids produced after eating or drinking and helps prevent dental decay. Fluoride also puts back minerals that are lost from teeth and can reverse the early stages of tooth decay.

Low fluoride toothpaste is recommended for young children (2-6 years) unless otherwise recommended by a dental professional. They should be encouraged to spit the toothpaste out after brushing rather than swallowing it.

## Other fact sheets for parents include:

