

DENTAL HEALTH POLICY

Woden Early Childhood Centre prioritises the dental health of the children who attend and has formulated this policy in order to promote dental health and minimise Early Childhood Centre (or dental decay in infants and toddlers)

“Children’s primary (baby) teeth are important for many reasons. They play a vital role in healthy diet, learning to speak and showing a child’s unique personality. In addition, primary teeth keep the correct spaces for the permanent (adult) teeth to move into later on. For these reasons it is important to take care of the primary teeth”(Colgate, A focus on Infants and Toddlers” 2003 page 1)

“Decay is caused when bacteria use sugars from foods to produce acids... continued acid attack leads to a cavity that requires a filling” (Colgate Oral Care, A Focus on Infants and Toddlers) In order to minimise decay tap water, (which contains fluoride) is readily available throughout the day to all children who attend Woden Early Childhood Centre. Staff are conscious of offering drinks of water after meals to wash away food particles and sugars which could cause decay.

While dummies have their place as comforters the staff at Woden Early Childhood Centre understand that “For some children prolonged sucking habits cause front teeth and the surrounding bone to be pushed out of shape” (Colgate 2003 p 3) Dummies will only be given to children when needed, for example settling in to care or at sleep time. For the same reason Children are not to be put to bed with a bottle unless requested by a parent during the transition to Care, where possible the child may be given an empty bottle or a bottle of water as an alternative.

Woden Early Childhood Centre is proactive in sharing health information with parents, staff and children. Information may be shared through guest speakers, educational videos, posters and pamphlets.

The meals provided at Woden Early Childhood Centre include 3 serves of dairy a day, this is because “Milk and cheese are recognised as having protective qualities that act as buffers and help to reduce dental decay” (Healthy teeth for life, QLD Health p 1) The provision of sugary foods is minimised as sugars turn to acid which promotes decay.

Toothbrushes are not used during the normal running of the centre as an infection control measure due to the high risk of cross contamination and storage issues. Children who supply their own brushes at out of centre hour events such as sleep overs are encouraged to use them.

References:

Colgate Oral Care: A focus on infants and toddlers May 2003
Healthy teeth for life, QLD Health 6/6/01
Ros Garrity , Dental Health Program ACT 6205 1384