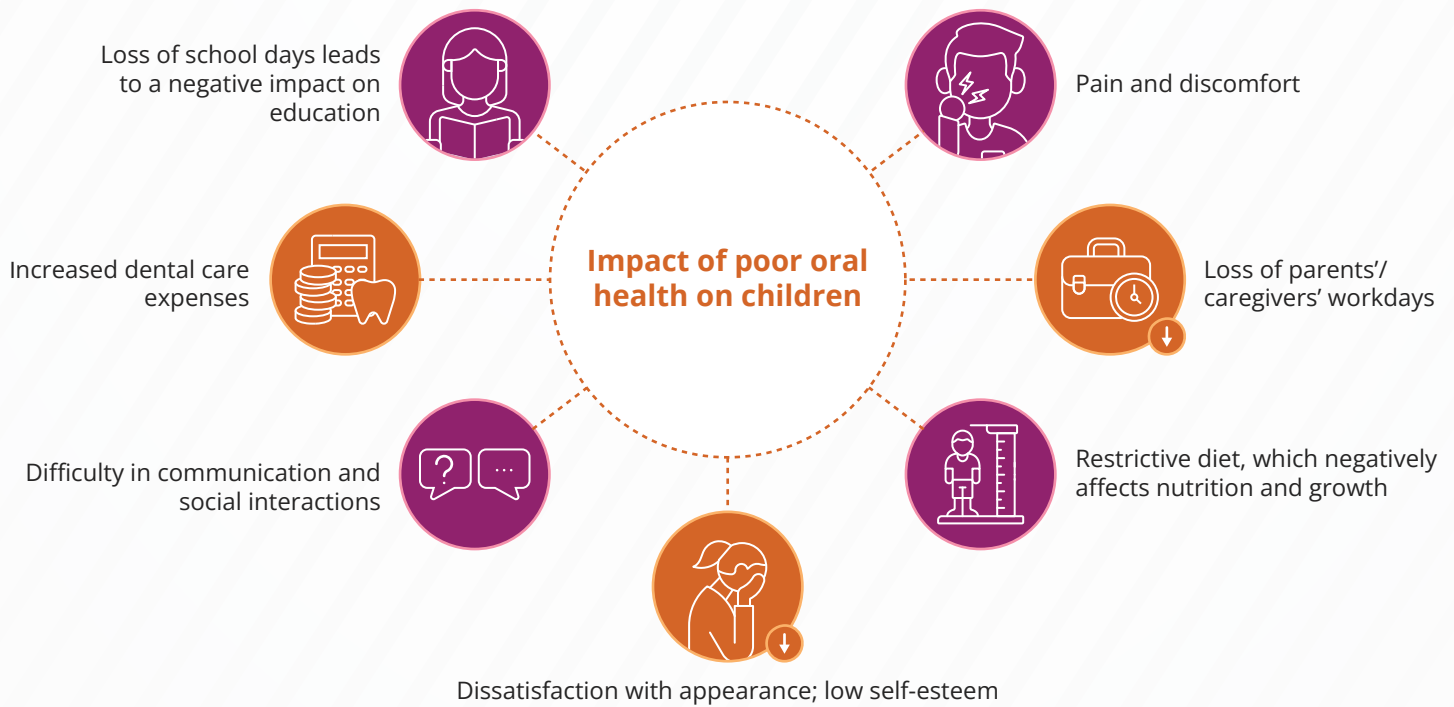


Framework for Teachers to Encourage Paediatric Dental Well-being

Utilising the influence of teachers in guiding children and parents towards improved oral health

Effective oral health habits established early in life have a positive impact on oral health attitudes and priorities throughout life



Teachers can contribute to raising oral health awareness in children, and through them, reach their families

Role of teachers in promoting oral health



Oral health awareness and education

- Integrate oral health into the curriculum
- Reinforce information repeatedly throughout the school years



Organise oral health promotion activities in schools

- Be equipped to deal with dental emergencies
- Make the physical environment of the school safe to minimise accidental oral trauma



Promote healthy eating behaviour

- Provide healthy food choices in school meals and vending machines



Benefits of school oral health programs

Promote positive behaviours such as regular brushing, healthy eating habits, and routine dental check-ups

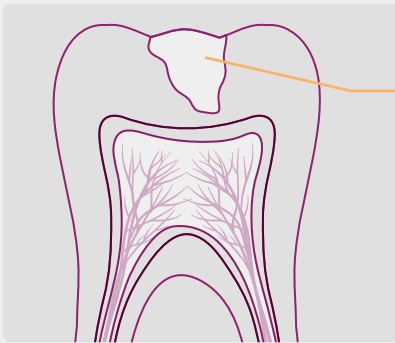
Reduce the prevalence of dental caries in children

Result in a significant reduction in plaque scores

Improve the overall oral health outcomes for children

Lead to reduced dental costs, lower risk of oral diseases, and improved overall health

Tooth decay: Management and prevention strategies



What causes tooth decay?

- Poor dental hygiene
- Eating sugary foods and sugary and acidic drinks leads to dental erosion
- Loss of minerals



White spots of demineralisation and plaque build-up

Damage is reversible with improved dental hygiene and fluoride application



Tooth breakdown and decay

Filling by a dental professional is recommended



Tooth decay extending to the innermost part of the tooth containing nerves and blood vessels causes tooth sensitivity, pain, and swelling

Tooth extraction

If a child is prone to tooth decay, dental professionals may recommend:



Toothpaste containing a higher concentration of fluoride



Fluoride varnish



Dental sealants to prevent damage

How can teachers prevent tooth decay in children and engage parents and caregivers in their child's oral health?

By recommending good brushing techniques



Encourage parents to ensure that their child brushes for 2 minutes twice daily with a fluoride-containing toothpaste



Inform parents and caregivers of the importance of giving children an age-appropriate fluoride-containing toothpaste

- 2–6 years: Toothpaste with 1,000 ppm fluoride
- Above the age of 6: Toothpaste with 1,450 ppm fluoride, e.g., stannous fluoride



Inform parents of the need to make sure that all surfaces of the child's teeth are brushed, particularly before bedtime



Encourage parents and caregivers to help their children brush their teeth until they are at least 7 years old



Raise awareness around the use of oscillating-rotating electric toothbrushes for better oral health outcomes. The caries incidence is 1.4 times higher for those using manual toothbrushes compared to oscillating-rotating electric toothbrushes

By encouraging healthy dietary habits, such as:



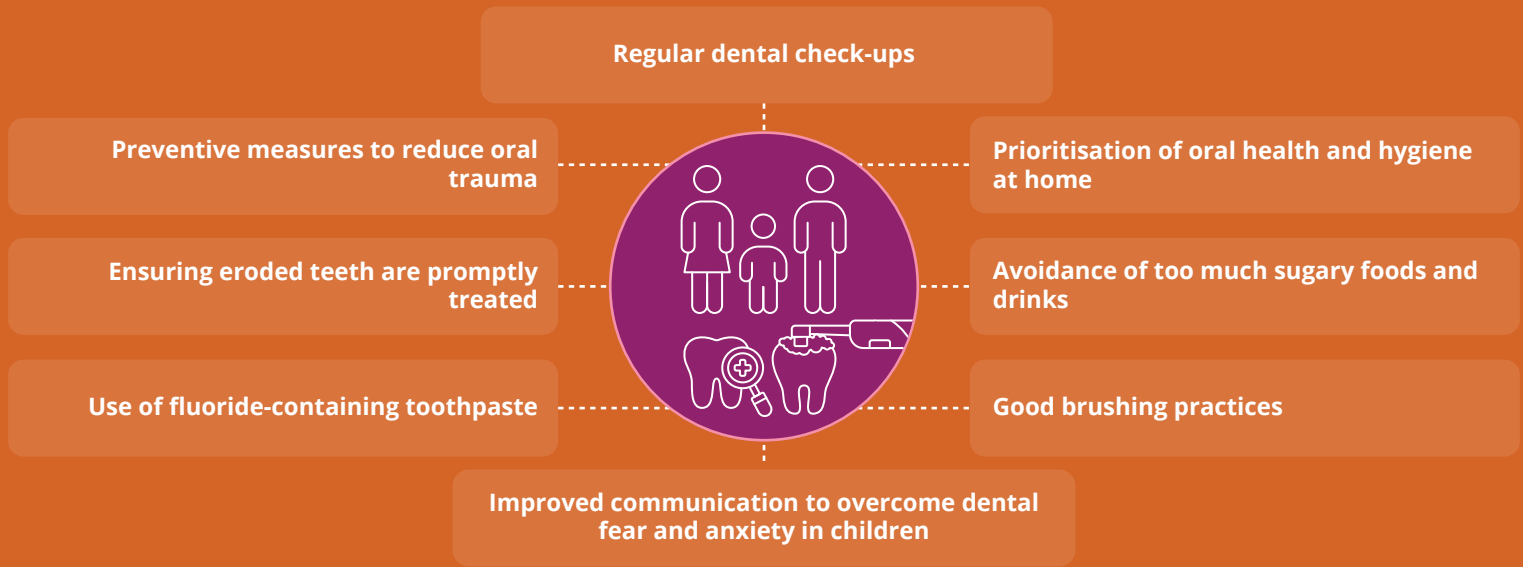
- Eating a nutritious and balanced diet
- Avoiding sugary foods and sugary, acidic drinks, especially before bedtime
- Providing healthy snacks and avoiding those with empty calories

By promoting healthy lifestyle choices:



- Promote personalised dental care for every child by recommending dental appointments based on individualised risk assessments and encouraging healthy dietary habits

Engaging parents in maintaining the oral health of their child



Strategies to prevent oral trauma



Dental professional counselling and services

Referral for protective gear



Mouth guards (stock, boil and bite, or custom fit)



Well-fitted helmets



Face shields

How can teachers manage dental emergencies in school?



Accident to soft tissues, such as lips or cheeks

- Calm and reassure the child
- Clean with water
- Apply ice to prevent/limit swelling
- Apply pressure with a sterile gauze pad to stop bleeding
- Provide medication for pain relief
- Refer to medical/dental evaluation



Fractured tooth

- Calm the child
- Refer to urgent dental care
- Cover sharp tooth edge with wax to prevent tissue lacerations
- Provide medication for pain relief



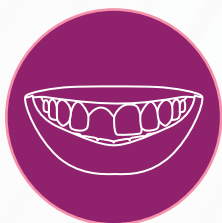
Loose tooth

- Try to put the tooth back into its original position by applying gentle pressure with your fingers or ask the child to bite down and hold the tooth in place
- Seek urgent dental care



Tooth knocked into the gums (intruded)

- Do not free or pull on the tooth
- Rinse the child's mouth
- Refer to urgent dental care



Fallen tooth (avulsed)

- Find the tooth and pick it up carefully
- Try to put the tooth back into its original position by applying gentle force using your fingers or ask the child to bite down and hold the tooth in place
- If the tooth cannot be put back in right away, keep it moist, store it in milk, or wrap it in a clean wet cloth without touching the root of the tooth
- Repositioning should be done as soon as possible, ideally within a couple of hours
- Seek urgent dental care

Key takeaways

- ✓ Teachers can create awareness about dental health and its impact on a child's overall well-being
- ✓ As a role model, teachers can help alleviate dental fear and anxiety in children and stress the prioritisation of oral health
- ✓ Early guidance on good dental hygiene practices, the positive impact of routine dental check-ups, and healthy lifestyle choices equip children to make sound oral health decisions throughout life

Further reading

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