



# your dental health

a guide for people with a  
disability, their family carers,  
friends and advocates



Inclusion Melbourne is a community support organisation that has worked with people with an intellectual disability for more than 65 years.

Unlike other disability day services, Inclusion Melbourne is not centre-based and doesn't ask you to select activities from a list, follow a group schedule or stay in a centre. Instead, Inclusion Melbourne supports you to live a fulfilled life, to participate in activities based on your own needs, wants and interests, and to develop meaningful friendships within your local community. In other words, Inclusion Melbourne offers fully personalised support in the community.

Inclusion Melbourne's vision is to provide people with the opportunity to live in an inclusive community and to take their place in society as respected citizens.

Your dental health is proudly endorsed by the Australian Dental Association



Suggested citation: Angwin, L, Leighton, D, & Despott, N (2015).

Your Dental Health: A Guide for People with a Disability, their Family Carers, Friends and Advocates.

Melbourne: Inclusion Melbourne. ISBN: 978-0-9922717-4-9

This publication may not be reproduced without the prior written permission of Inclusion Designlab or Inclusion Melbourne.



Inclusion Designlab is Inclusion Melbourne's engine room for research, innovation, communications and policy.

Our vision is to bring together people with a disability, community organisations, and the world's leading disability researchers to develop cutting-edge models of practice, choice and citizenship that shatter glass ceilings and promote a more inclusive Australia.

We do this by developing, trialling, and implementing new systems of support and communicating our insights through a range of publications and media. We are also significant contributors to public policy and government inquiries.

The products and services created by Inclusion Designlab contribute to the continuous development of the disability sector through evidence based practice, accessible materials, and vital training for families and collegiate organisations

The Dental Health pilot was funded by: nib foundation & Gawith Foundation



## how to read this book

3

## part A: your teeth and gums

5 – 11

## part B: how to brush and floss

13 – 17

## part C: the dentist

19 – 33

## useful items

35 – 37

## preface

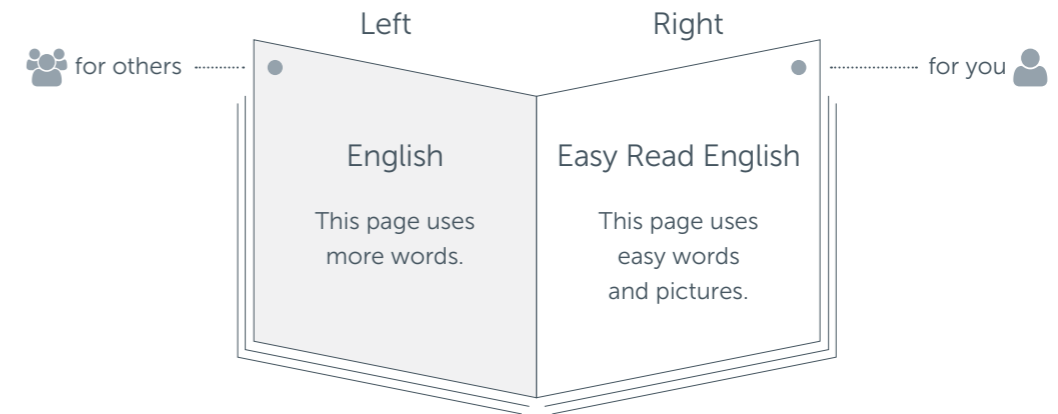
Globally, very few oral health resources exist for young people with intellectual disability. *Your Dental Health: A Guide for People with a Disability, Their Family Carers, Friends and Advocates* raises the bar in this domain. It is a guide written for Australians with intellectual disability that outlines how to look after your teeth and gums. Further, it demystifies options in seeking dental care (such as public versus private) and what to expect during a visit to the dentist.

*Your Dental Health* is in three parts. The first is about your teeth and gums. It prompts you to reflect on the current state of your oral health. The second provides a step-by-step guide to caring for your teeth and gums. Lastly, the final section helps you navigate the Australian dental health system.

Writing this guide was a collaborative process. Inclusion Melbourne would like to thank nib foundation for providing a grant to undertake this Dental Health Project. We would like to express our gratitude to the Australian Dental Association for its strong support and encouragement, and particularly for its assistance in ensuring the clinical accuracy of the guide's content. We would like to thank Dr Philip Bliss and Bliss Dentistry as well as Dr Paula Bacchia, Dr Martin Hall and North Richmond Community Health for their generous support and time assisting with the photography.

## how to read this book

This book is separated into two sides. Both sides have the same information.



🔊 → You will see this picture next to words you may not understand. There is a glossary at the back of the book. The glossary tells you what these words mean.

These boxes are for family carers, friends and advocates who may be reading this book on behalf of a person with an intellectual disability.



## australian oral health – where do people with a disability stand?

Overall, Australians enjoy healthy teeth and gums; however, some groups of people experience more oral health problems than others and find it harder to get help. People with a disability are one of these groups.

Research looking at the dental health of adults with intellectual disability regularly finds problems such as:

- Gum disease
- Tooth decay
- Heavy tooth wear as a result of bruxism (tooth grinding)
- A different treatment pattern with a higher proportion of missing and filled teeth
- Defects of tooth enamel
- Delayed eruption of teeth
- Retained primary teeth
- Poor oral and denture (false teeth) health<sup>1</sup>

Gum disease and tooth decay are the most common oral problems facing Australians.

## a focus on prevention

The best way to improve oral health outcomes is to prevent dental problems in young people. The sooner you start looking after your oral health, the less likely you are to experience problems in the future.

Most dental diseases are completely preventable. By focusing on prevention early, you maximise the likelihood of enjoying oral health for life. Follow the advice outlined in this book to set you on the right path to a healthy mouth.

You are the most important person to look after your oral health.

If you are reading this book as a family carer, friend or advocate on behalf of someone, you are the most important person to look after their oral health.

1. Cumella, S., Ransford, N., Lyons, J. & Burnham, H. (2000). Needs for oral care among people with intellectual disability not in contact with Community Dental Services. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*. 44(1) 45-52.

## part A: your teeth and gums

### how are your teeth and gums?

Most people have good teeth and gums – but some people don't. These people have problems with their teeth and gums.

Problems with your teeth and gums can happen if you don't look after your oral health 🦷.

These are pictures of some problems that can happen:



Calculus 🦷



Tooth decay 🦷



Gum disease 🦷



Missing teeth

Gum disease and tooth decay happen the most.

### start looking after your teeth and gums NOW!

Everybody has the right to enjoy healthy teeth and gums.

Taking care of your mouth while you are young is the best way to stop any problems. You will learn how to take care of your teeth and gums later in this book.

You are the most important person to look after your oral health.

It doesn't matter how old you are. Start learning how to take care of your oral health now.

## diet can cause problems

Changes begin in your mouth the minute you start to eat and drink.

The bacteria in your mouth (plaque) start turning the sugar, found in the food and drinks, into acids. These acids attack your teeth, dissolving their protective, outer-coating (enamel).

With the outer-coating softened, the acids can begin to create holes in your teeth. This is known as 'tooth decay' (or dental caries or cavities). The damage of tooth decay is permanent. Decay can eventually reach your tooth's nerve, causing long-lasting pain.

When we talk about the source of tooth-decay (sugar), most people think about added sugar found in lollies and sweets. However, bacteria not only use the sugar in sweets to create harmful acid. They can also use any food and drink that contain sugars and carbohydrates.

## how to avoid diet-related tooth decay

To prevent tooth decay, it is not practical to cut out all food and drinks that contain sugar and carbohydrates in your diet.

If you maintain an overall healthy diet, you will certainly be on the right track. To realistically combat tooth decay follow these three suggestions:

1. **Brush your teeth** twice a day, once in the morning and once at night. Floss once a day.
2. **Avoid eating certain snacks and drinks** between meals.

Try not to eat or drink the following:

- Sugary sweets like lollies and chocolate
- Starchy, refined carbohydrates like potato chips and white bread
- Carbonated soft drinks (including sugar-free alternatives and energy drinks)
- Fruit juice
- Sticky snack foods like dried fruit

These foods can provide a constant source of energy for bacteria to form harmful acids.

3. **Chew sugar-free gum** between meals to stimulate saliva. Saliva provides a strong protective film to the teeth and helps wash away damaging acids. It also clears the mouth of food.

## food, drinks and your teeth

When you eat food and have a drink, the sugar in the food and drink stays in your mouth.

The sugar can start to hurt your teeth by making a hole. This is called tooth decay.

Sugar can be found in lots of food and drinks, not just in lollies and sweets.

Holes in your teeth make them...

⚠️ **Sore and,**

⚠️ **Look ugly**

Holes in your teeth do not go away unless you see a dentist.

If you feel pain in your tooth see a dentist and check you are looking after your teeth in the best way.

## part A: your teeth and gums

### how to stop tooth decay

There are some things you can do to stop sugar from making holes in your teeth. Here are some ideas:

🪥 **Brush your teeth** in the morning☀️ and at night🌙. Floss once a day.

🗨️ **In between meals, try not to eat or drink...**



🦷 **Chew sugar-free gum after lunch**

Chewing gum helps your mouth to make saliva. Saliva helps to stop sugar from making holes in your teeth.

## how smoking affects oral health

Smoking has a direct impact on your oral health. It significantly increases the chance of developing gum disease. Smokers are six times more likely to have serious gum disease?

Gum disease is a bacterial infection that destroys the soft tissue and bone that anchor your teeth to your jaw bones. In the early stages, a common sign is bleeding gums when you brush. However, because smoking reduces blood flow to the supporting tissues of your teeth, smokers with gum disease may not experience bleeding gums. As a result, smoking both causes and hides the signs of gum disease.

As gum disease worsens, your gums begin to breakdown. Eventually, your teeth may become loose and painful and can fall out.

As well as gum disease, smoking also can give you:

- Bad breath
- Poorer sense of smell and taste of food
- Teeth staining
- Mouth cancer (among other cancers)

## quit NOW

You will greatly reduce the serious risks to your oral health.

## medication and your oral health

Some medications cause the side effect of a dry mouth. Examples of these include the following:

- Antihistamines
- Decongestants
- Painkillers
- Muscle relaxants
- Drugs for urinary incontinence
- Anti-depressants
- Asthma inhalers, relievers and preventers

Medications can also be sugar-based. Long term use of sugar-based medications can also lead to tooth decay.

Having a dry mouth means a reduction in saliva flow. This is a concern because saliva protects teeth. With low levels of saliva, the risk of tooth decay and gum disease increases greatly.

### What can carers do to help?

- Offer water regularly through the use of a drink bottle or spray bottle.
- Check the sugar content of commonly used medication and limit the use of, or find alternatives to, sugar-based medications.
- Suggest the use of products that assist in the production of saliva to the person you care for (e.g. sugar-free gum, salivary substitutes).

## smoking



Every time you smoke a cigarette, the smoke does bad things to your teeth and gums.

Smoking ruins your gums. Gums keep your teeth in your mouth. Smoking makes your gums pull away from your teeth making them loose. Your teeth will hurt and can fall out. This is called gum disease.

Smoking...

- ☞ Gives you bad breath
- ☞ Makes the smell and taste of food not as good
- ☞ Turns your teeth yellow
- ☞ Gives you mouth and lung cancer ⚠

## quit NOW

To stop these problems from happening to your body.

## part A: your teeth and gums

## medication



Some medication you take can make your mouth dry.

Having a dry mouth is bad for your teeth and gums. It also makes it hard to chew and swallow food.

If you have a dry mouth, try to drink lots of water. Or if this is hard, the person who cares for you can spray water into your mouth.



Water

Spray bottle

There are products that can help you get more saliva in your mouth. Visit your local chemist to find these products.





## how to brush your teeth

1. Squeeze a pea-sized amount of toothpaste onto the bristles of your toothbrush.
2. Position the toothbrush above your gum line. Gently brush away from the gum line, using a circular motion. Never brush vigorously as this may damage enamel over time. Clean the outsides of your upper teeth and lower teeth.
3. Repeat this on the inside of your teeth.
4. Use a backwards and forwards motion on the chewing surfaces.
5. Spit out the toothpaste. Do not swallow it.

Once you have spat out the toothpaste, it is preferable you do not rinse your mouth out with water. Common toothpaste brands contain fluoride. Fluoride helps prevent tooth decay. By leaving the remnants of toothpaste in your mouth, your teeth have greater time exposure to fluoride, protecting them from decay.

For optimum oral health, the Australian Dental Association recommends brushing your teeth twice a day for two minutes.

Brush once in the morning after breakfast and once at night just before you go to sleep.

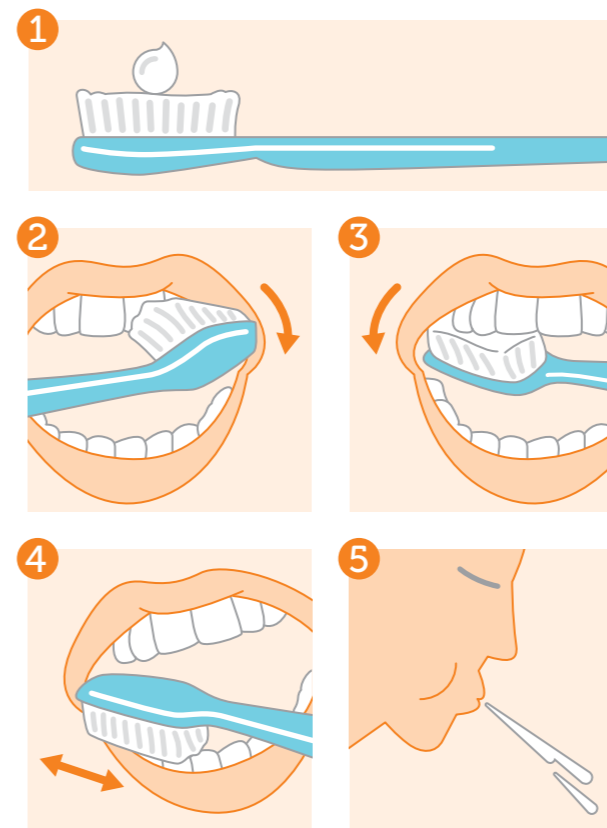
## how to brush someone else's teeth

There may be situations when someone you care for needs help to brush their teeth.

1. Ask the person to find a comfortable place to sit in an upright position. They need to be able to relax their mouth and jaw.
2. Position yourself so the person can see you. You could place a mirror in front of the two of you. You can be in front of them, at the side or behind, whichever is easiest for you.
3. Use disposable gloves for hygiene. Never put your fingers between a person's teeth.
4. Talk them through what you are doing and show them what tools you are going to use.
5. Use a pea-sized amount of tooth paste and place the bristles of the toothbrush on the part of the tooth where the gums and teeth meet. Brush all surfaces gently, working on one or two teeth at a time.
6. Help the person spit out the toothpaste into a bowl (or basin if you are in the bathroom). Rinsing out their mouth with water is not necessary.

## part B: how to brush and floss

### how to brush your teeth



Brushing your teeth is the best thing you can do for your oral health. Every day you must brush your teeth...

⚙️ Once in the morning

🌙 Once at night

🕒 For 2 minutes (use a timer to help you).

### getting help to brush your teeth

It is okay if you need help to brush your teeth. Your mum, dad or carer can help you.

This is how they can brush your teeth in the best way possible...

**Your carer should:**

- 🪑 Find a comfortable place to sit.
- 🔍 Sit in front, next to or behind you. You can ask them to put a mirror in front of you so you can see what is going on.
- 🧤 Wear gloves to keep your mouth safe.
- 🗣️ Talk you through what they will be doing.
- 🪥 Brush your teeth gently using toothpaste.
- 🗑️ Help you spit out the toothpaste.

## oral hygiene tools

There are a variety of toothbrushes available in supermarkets and chemists. To assist you in choosing the right toothbrush, follow these points:

- Always choose a soft-bristle brush, as hard-bristle brushes can wear away enamel if used too vigorously.
- Choose a small-headed toothbrush as it can reach all areas of your mouth including behind your back teeth (e.g. children's toothbrushes).
- An electric toothbrush can assist people who have trouble coordinating hand and arm movements.
- Remember to change toothbrush (or toothbrush head if you use an electric toothbrush) every 3 months.

If you are a carer who brushes someone's teeth you could use a bite block. A bite block is a device that helps to keep the mouth open. As the name suggests, the person bites on the block to expose their teeth. This way, they don't have to hold their mouth open for long periods of time.

## why floss & how to do it

The Australian Dental Association recommends flossing daily, before brushing. Flossing removes left over food in places where a toothbrush cannot easily reach.

### How do you floss?

1. Cut off about 45cm of floss. Gently wrap an end of the floss around one middle finger, then do the same with the other end of the floss around your other middle finger. Leave about 3cm of floss unwrapped between your fingers.
2. Grab the unwrapped floss between your thumb and index fingers. Gently slide it up between two teeth. Now, bring the floss down, away from your teeth. The idea is to get the food that is stuck in the gap out.
3. Unwind clean sections of the floss as you move from gap to gap between your teeth.
4. Once finished remove the floss from your fingers and throw it away.

If you are not comfortable using floss or find it difficult, try an interdental brush or floss pick instead. These tools achieve the same result and may be easier to hold and use.

## part B: how to brush and floss

### what toothbrush to use

Choose a toothbrush that has...

- Soft bristles
- A small head (like a children's toothbrush)

There are 2 types of tooth brushes...



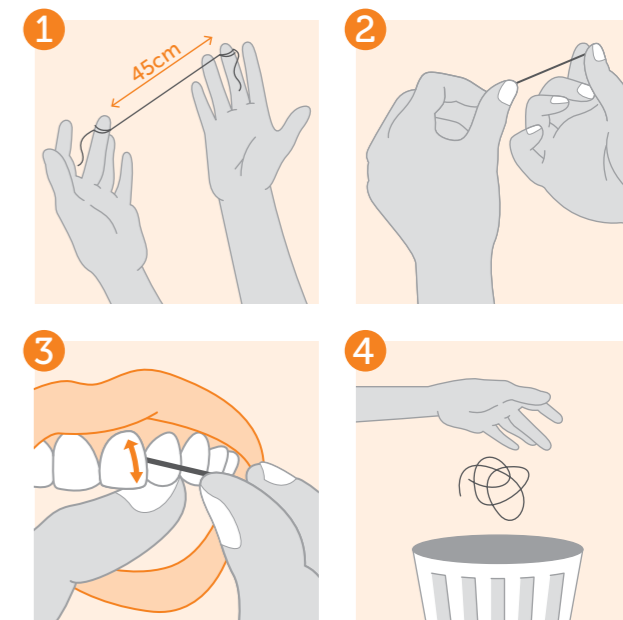
Manual

Electric

An electric toothbrush can be easier if you find it hard to use a manual toothbrush.

Change your toothbrush (or toothbrush head if you use an electric toothbrush) every 3 months.

### how to floss



Flossing gets rid of food that is stuck in between your teeth. Make sure you floss before you brush.

If holding floss is too hard, you can also try...



Interdental brush

Floss pick



## when to see a dentist

It is recommended by the Australian Dental Association to visit the dentist for a check-up every 6 months.

As well as seeing a dentist every 6 months, you may also need to see your dentist if you experience any of the following problems:

- Toothache
- Bleeding gums
- Facial swelling
- Dental trauma

If your tooth is knocked out, it is preferable that you re-implant it into its socket. If this is not possible, wrap the tooth in plastic or place it in milk and see a dentist immediately. It may be possible to put the tooth back.

All these problems are serious and need to be looked at by a dentist as soon as possible.

Do not put off seeing a dentist. If you do, you may end up paying more money, do more damage and experience pain.

## general dental care: your choices

If you are planning to visit a dentist for a check-up or have a concern regarding your teeth and gums but do not know where to go, these next few pages will help you decide.

There are two pathways you can take to access general dental care:

- Option 1 is public
- Option 2 is private

It is important you know about both because they each have their own advantages. The route you decide to take may be influenced by a number of reasons such as your financial situation or your locality. Whatever you decide on, after reading this book, your decision will be an informed one.

Turn the page to learn about option 1: **public** dental health services.

## part C: the dentist

### when to see a dentist

Visit the dentist every 6 months (even if you don't have any pain in your mouth).

You may also need to see the dentist if your...

 Tooth hurts, is wobbly or falls out

 Your gums are bleeding

 A part of your jaw is swollen

### where to go to see a dentist

Choosing where to go to see a dentist can seem tricky. You have 2 options.

Option 1 is go to the **public** dentist.

OR

Option 2 is go to a **private** dentist.

The **public** dentist and **private** dentist are different. The next few pages will help you understand what a **public** dentist is and what a **private** dentist is. You can choose which one is best for you. You can ask your mum, dad or carer to help you.

Turn the page to learn about option 1: **public** dentist.

## general dental care: your choices

### option ① public

Dental Health Services Victoria (DHSV) is the leading public oral health agency in the state. DHSV aim to improve the oral health of all Victorians, particularly those most in need. DHSV have set up Community Dental Clinics in the metropolitan and rural areas of Victoria. Visiting a Community Dental Health Clinic for dental care is a low-cost alternative to private dental services.

#### Who is eligible?

- All children aged 0 – 12 years
- Young people aged 13 – 17 years who are health care or pensioner concession card holders or dependents of concession card holders
- Adults aged 18 years and older, who are health care or pensioner concession card holders or dependents of concession card holders

#### You are eligible, now what do you do?

Book an appointment at your nearest Community Dental Clinic. To find your nearest Community Dental Clinic, visit [www.dhsv.org.au](http://www.dhsv.org.au) or call 1300 360 054 (standard charges apply).

#### Will you go on a waiting list?

Waiting times vary between clinics. The average waiting time for general care is 12.4 months.<sup>3</sup> However, the waiting time can shorten if you have priority access.

#### Who has priority access?

- Children (0-12) years and young people (12-17 years) living in residential care
- Registered clients of disability services supported by a letter of recommendation from their case manager or staff member of their special school

#### What should you expect to pay?

General dental care is **free** for the following groups of people:

- Children and young people (0-17 years) who are government concession card holders or dependents of concession card holders
- Students of special or special development schools
- Registered clients of disability services, supported by a letter of recommendation from their case manager
- Those experiencing financial hardship

For more information on the services DHSV provides, visit [www.dhsv.org.au](http://www.dhsv.org.au)

3. Dental Health Services Victoria Annual Report 2013/2014.

## part C: the dentist

### where to go to see a dentist

#### option ① public

There is a group called Dental Health Services Victoria that wants to make dental care easy for people who need it. Dental Health Services Victoria have made special dental clinics (where dentists work) called Community Dental Clinics. Community Dental Clinics are special because when you see a dentist at these clinics, it doesn't cost you a lot of money.

To see a dentist at a Community Dental Clinic, you have to be eligible.

#### You are eligible, if...

You are older than 13 and have either of these cards:

OR

Your mum, dad or carer who looks after you full-time has one of the cards.

#### If you are eligible, now what do you do?

Find the closest Community Dental Clinic to your home.

☎ Phone 1300 360 054

🖥 Visit [www.dhsv.org.au](http://www.dhsv.org.au)

#### Will you have to wait?

There are lots of people who want to see a dentist at Community Dental Clinics just like you. You may have to wait for a long time for your turn to see a dentist.

But! You won't have to wait a long time if you go to a special school or day service.

#### Will it be free?

To have your teeth looked at and cleaned, it will cost you no money if...

- You are 17 years old or younger and have either of these cards:



OR

- Your mum, dad or carer who looks after you full-time has one of the cards.
- You go to a special school
- You go to a disability service
- You don't have a lot of money

If you don't live in Victoria, ask your mum, dad or carer to help you find your state's public service.

## part C: the dentist

## general dental care: your choices

## option ② private

Most people seeking dental care visit their local private dental clinic. To find one in your local area the Australian Dental Association has made it easy for you to search for registered clinics. Visit [www.ada.org.au](http://www.ada.org.au) to search for one near you.

At your local dental clinic you pay for the care you receive 'out of pocket', meaning you pay the whole amount. Medicare does not currently offer a rebate (return of part of the amount). How much you pay is up to the specific dental clinic you are visiting and what type of services you receive. Typically, you are charged per service rather than per hour you are there. The table below outlines mean fees of services most commonly needed by people living in Victoria.<sup>4</sup>

	Service	Mean Fee
Diagnostic	Comprehensive consultation (new client) OR	\$60
	Periodic consultation (existing client)	\$52
	X-ray	\$43
Preventative	Calculus removal (calculus is hardened plaque)	\$109
Oral Surgery	Removal of, or parts of, a tooth	\$165
Restorative	Adhesive (filling)	\$143 to \$248 per tooth
Periodontics	Root planing and curettage (cleaning of 'pockets' formed in gums)	\$79 per tooth

The table of fees has been included to give you an idea of what to expect to pay in Victoria. If you are quoted largely above the average fees listed here, then consider seeking treatment elsewhere.

If you have private health insurance you may not have to pay as much for services from the dentist. Check with your health insurer for details.

4. Australian Dental Fees Survey 2012, Australian Dental Association.

## where to go to see a dentist

## option ② private

If you choose not to see a public dentist at Dental Health Services Victoria, you can go to a private dentist.

A private dentist is a dentist that works in his or her own dental clinic. There will be a private dental clinic in your local community. You can walk into the dental clinic to book an appointment. Or, you can ask your mum, dad or carer to help you find out their phone number to call and book an appointment. Most of the time, you only have to wait a few days to get one.

If you go to a private dentist, you will pay for the dental care he or she gives you. Some private dentists ask for more money than others.

When you go in for a check-up, the dentist will give your teeth a clean. If this is all they need to do, the appointment will cost you around \$169 (dollars). The more problems the dentist finds with your teeth and gums, the more money it will cost you.

Do you have private health insurance?

If you have private health insurance, seeing the dentist could cost you less money. Ask your mum, dad or carer if you have private health insurance.

# part C: the dentist

## what happens at the dentist

Tell reception you are here.



The dentist calls your name.  
Greet the dentist.



Put on glasses and bib. The dentist checks your teeth and gums.



X-ray  for a closer look.



2



Sit down in the waiting area.

4



The dentist checks information about you.

6



The dentist cleans your teeth and gums.

8



Pay and book next appointment.

## dental specialties

There are a number of specialty areas in the dentistry field. The next few pages contain information about four speciality areas that may be of relevance to you.

When you visit your dentist, he or she will recommend you see a dental specialist if they discover a serious problem or if a specialist is better suited to your needs.

Dental specialists also deal with the cosmetic side of oral health, serving to improve the appearance of your teeth, gums, mouth and overall, your face.

Like general dentists, dental specialists can work in the public or private sector. Public dental specialists require a referral from your dentist. Private dental specialists do not. To search for dental specialists in your local area visit the Australian Dental Association website at [www.ada.org.au](http://www.ada.org.au).

### 1. Periodontics

Periodontics relates to the treatment of diseases of the supporting and surrounding tissues of teeth, i.e. your gums. A specialist in this field is called a periodontist.

Periodontists often treat more problematic periodontal (gum) cases, such as people with severe periodontal disease or a complex medical history. Periodontists offer a wide range of treatments, including cleaning infected surfaces and removing damaged tissue.

Periodontists are also specially trained in the placement, maintenance, and repair of dental implants.

### 2. Orthodontics

Orthodontics relates to the treatment of dental and facial irregularities, i.e. crooked teeth and poor jaw alignment. It involves the application of corrective methods (e.g. braces) to bring teeth, lips and jaw into proper position to achieve a facial balance.

A specialist in this field is called an orthodontist. However, some general dentists do orthodontic work.

Crooked teeth and teeth that do not fit together properly are harder to keep clean. They are therefore at risk of falling out early due to tooth decay and periodontal disease. Poorly positioned teeth can also cause stress on chewing muscles.

As well as these functional problems, teeth that are crooked and not positioned correctly can detract from your appearance. Undergoing orthodontic treatment will not only straighten teeth for health, it will boost confidence by giving you a great smile. Nobody should feel self-conscious and embarrassed by the layout of their teeth.

#### Are braces only for teenagers?

No! Braces (or other similar methods for straightening teeth) can be applied at almost any age for adults. You are never too old to look your best.

## other kinds of dentists

There are other kinds of dentists besides your normal dentist. These dentists are called **specialists**. On this page and the next page, you will read about 4 different specialists.

Your dentist will tell you if you need to see a specialist.

You can see a public specialist or a private specialist.

**Your dentist can help you see a public specialist.**



### 1. Periodontist

A periodontist fixes gum problems like gum disease.

They give your gums a good clean. They also take out any parts of your gum that are not healthy.



### 2. Orthodontist

An orthodontist fixes teeth that are not straight or in the wrong spot. They also fix your jaw if there is a problem.

Teeth that are not straight are harder to keep clean when you brush. This means you can get tooth decay.

When an orthodontist straightens your teeth it is easier to talk, chew and swallow. It also gives you a great smile!

## part C: the dentist



## dental specialties continued

### 3. Paediatric dentistry

Paediatric Dentistry relates to the oral health care of children and adolescents, including those with special medical, developmental and behavioural needs.

Paediatric dentists provide comprehensive oral care while considering a child's behavioural and developmental characteristics, and oro-facial growth (oro-facial refers to the mouth and face). Paediatric dentists also consider how these relate to children with medical and/or a developmental disability.

There are paediatric dentists in the private sector as well as the public sector, such as the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) and the Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne (RDHM). RDHM is a branch of Dental Health Services Victoria.

You do not need a referral to see a private paediatric dentist, and your general dentist can refer you to the paediatric dentistry departments at RCH and RDHM if you are eligible.

For more information on paediatric dentistry visit the Australasian Academy of Paediatric Dentistry website at [www.aapd.org.au](http://www.aapd.org.au).

### 4. Special needs dentistry

Special Needs Dentists manage the oral health of people with complex health care needs. This includes people who are medically compromised (e.g. undergoing transplant or cancer treatment), have a physical or intellectual disability, or who have psychiatric or psychological issues (e.g. experience anxiety or depression).

Special Needs Dentists also help people who experience a dry mouth as a result of taking medication, because such people experience discomfort and are prone to tooth decay. This includes people at any age and in any setting, be it those living at home, or in an aged care or supported residential facility.

Generally, a person with complex health care needs has difficulty looking after the state of their mouth and may experience barriers visiting the dentist. Special Needs Dentists can help overcome these concerns as they work specifically with people impacted by such serious health care needs.

## part C: the dentist

### other kinds of dentists



#### 3. Paediatric dentist

Paediatric may be a hard word to say. You can say *pee*-diatric.

A paediatric dentist looks after the teeth and gums of people under the age of 18. This means they help babies, children and teenagers.

Our teeth change as we become an adult. So, paediatric dentists know a lot about how our bodies grow, like our mouth and face.



#### 4. Special needs dentist

A special needs dentist works with people who are very sick or have a disability.

Special needs dentists also help people who have a very dry mouth. Special needs dentists help these people because they can get tooth decay easily.

## part C: the dentist

### what do dentists need to know?

The Special Needs dentists at Dental Health Services Victoria have many years of experience working with people with intellectual disability. To assist other dentists in working with people with intellectual disability, DHSV suggests the following advice:

#### A successful visit requires successful preparation

Preparation needs to involve more than scheduling an appointment time. Ask the following questions –

- Are there any medical issues?
- Is the person taking any medication?
- Are there physical access issues?
- If not the person, who is going advocate and sign off on the medical consent?

#### During the appointment, be mindful of how you communicate

- Talk to the person first and if necessary their carer second.
- If the person you are treating uses limited or no verbal communication, utilise the knowledge of the carer. They may know a great deal about what the person likes/dislikes and what the person responds well to.
- Give the person time to process information.

#### See the environment through the eyes of the person

- Make the person feel comfortable and at ease by taking things slowly.
- If the person shows apprehension, try to demystify what ever it is the person is worrying about (e.g. getting into the dental chair) by demonstrating what it is and what it does.
- Rethink your clinical attire. The person may feel more at ease if you are wearing casual clothes.

### what does the dentist need to know about you?

It is important that you feel happy and safe at the dentist. To make sure you do, the dentist needs to know a few things about you.

Before you see the dentist, a person from the dental clinic may ask these questions...

- How is your health?
- Do you take any medication?
- Do you use a wheelchair?
- Who signs papers when you go to the doctor? Is it you? Or does your carer?

While you are at the dentist, the dentist needs to know...

- Talking to you first is better than just talking to your carer.
- You understand better when people take things slow.
- Like everybody, you feel more comfortable when you understand what is going on.
- If you don't like talking, your carer can help the dentist get to know you and what you like.



## glossary

### Calculus

Calculus is the name for the bad stuff that builds around your teeth, making them unhealthy. Calculus is also called tartar.

### Cancer

Cancer is a serious sickness. It can spread to different parts of your body making you very unwell.

### Community dental clinic

Dental clinic is a place where you can get your teeth and gums looked at by the dentist. Community means the dental clinic is for everybody.

### Dental

Anything to do with your teeth.

### Dental Health Services Victoria

A group of people who want to help other people (like you) to have healthy teeth and gums.

### Dentist

A dentist is a person who knows all about teeth and gums. They are like doctors but only look after your mouth. A dentist can be a man or a woman, young or old.

### Eligible

Only some people are allowed.

### Gum disease

Disease is another word for 'being sick'. Gum disease means your gums are sick. When your gums are sick, they become very red and get bigger than normal. They bleed while you brush your teeth. You can get gum disease if you smoke or do not look after your gums properly.

### Option

Another word for choice.

### Oral health

Having no problems with your mouth. Having no problems like tooth decay, tooth loss, gum disease, mouth cancer, mouth sores, pain in your mouth, or any other problem that can happen to your teeth and gums. Oral health means your mouth is healthy.

### Oral hygiene

Oral is another word for 'mouth'. Hygiene means being clean. Together, the words oral hygiene mean keeping your mouth clean and healthy.

### Private health insurance

A company you pay money to, a little bit at a time to help pay your doctor and dentist bill. They may pay when you go to the dentist.

### Swollen

Gets bigger than normal.

### Tooth decay

Decay is when something that is healthy starts to break. Tooth decay is when your tooth starts to break. This happens when you get small holes in your tooth and your tooth is no longer strong.

### X-ray

A way of taking a special photo of the inside of your body. Only an X-ray machine can take this kind of photo.

### Saliva

The wet stuff you feel in your mouth. It helps soften food making it easier to chew. It also protects your teeth from tooth decay.

## more information

If you would like more information on dental health, here is a list of websites to help you.

Australian Dental Association

[www.ada.org.au](http://www.ada.org.au)

Australian Dental Association Victoria Branch

[www.adavb.net](http://www.adavb.net)

Dental Health Services Victoria

[www.dhsv.org.au](http://www.dhsv.org.au)

Better Health Channel

[www.betterhealthchannel.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealthchannel.vic.gov.au)

Colgate Australia

[www.colgate.com.au](http://www.colgate.com.au)

National Oral Health Plan

[www.oralhealthplan.com.au](http://www.oralhealthplan.com.au)

## recent publications



### it's my choice! toolkit

Guide to decision making and planning tools for people with disability, families, advocates and organisations.



### seven approaches

Guide to support people, identify opportunities and connect with their community.



### circles of support

Guide for family carers, friends and advocates who want to start a Circle of Support.



### choosing the right support provider

Guide to help people choose a service to provide them with support.

[Click here to download copies from Inclusion Melbourne](#)



67 Sutherland Road, Armadale, VIC 3143

T. 03 9509 4266 | F. 03 9576 0378

E. [includeme@inclusion.melbourne](mailto:includeme@inclusion.melbourne) | W. [inclusion.melbourne](http://inclusion.melbourne)

 Inclusion Melbourne Inc. |  InclusionMelb