

Free Dental Care for Under 18s

Dental care is free for children from birth till their 18th birthday. The free dental service is provided by Bee Healthy across the Wellington Region (Wellington, Hutt Valley, Porirua and Kāpiti Coast). Bee Healthy has 13 dental clinics across the region.

Children enrolled with Bee Healthy are entitled to receive a free annual dental check-up from their second birthday. These are usually appointment at their nearest Bee Healthy Dental Hub.

Bee Healthy also visits a selected number of early childhood centres yearly to provide onsite dental checks. For children attending these centres, this will often be the child's first dental experience. The aim is to make the child's experience as enjoyable as possible, in an environment they feel comfortable.

Baby Teeth

Baby teeth usually start appearing around 6 months age. They are important for eating, speaking and keeping space for adult teeth.

Look after baby teeth and prevent tooth decay by:

- Limiting sugary foods/drinks.
- Brushing teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
- Visiting the dentist every year for a check-up so any signs of tooth decay can be treated early.



Onsite Dental Check-up for Preschoolers at Early Childhood Centres

Bee Healthy works with the early childhood centre's head teacher/manager to ensure that children at the centre are enrolled with Bee Healthy and have permission from their parent/caregiver to receive onsite dental check-ups.

Children (approximately two to five years old) who have not yet received their annual dental check will be seen by a registered Bee Healthy oral health/dental therapist who visits the early childhood centre once a year. Some children may have already had a dental check during the year, so they may not need to be seen again when the dental therapists visits. Bee Healthy will provide the centre with a list of children who will be seen for a check-up.

Parents/caregivers are warmly welcome to support their child during their dental check-up. It is a great opportunity to ask the therapists any questions about their child's teeth.

The therapist will check the children's teeth using a method called knee-to-knee exam:

- A teacher will sit facing the therapists.
- The child will sit on the teachers lap facing them, then lie down into the therapist's lap (as shown below).

The dental therapist will wear a head torch and check the children's teeth using a small mirror and probe.

A fluoride varnish may be applied to help keep teeth strong and prevent tooth decay. See the *Fluoride Varnish Information Sheet* for more information. Another fluoride varnish application six months after a check-up may be recommended if a child is more prone to tooth decay. This will be provided by Bee Healthy.

A child's dental check will take 5-10 minutes.

