

special report



a healthier approach  
to dentistry for children,  
teens and young adults

dental  wellness™

[dentalwellness.com.au](http://dentalwellness.com.au)

## What Is Holistic Dentistry?


It is the integration of natural health philosophies with up to date dental practices.

Holistic Dentistry includes all aspects of general and cosmetic dentistry but also draws from the philosophies of complementary and progressive medicine to provide a complete level of care.

Dental procedures are conducted using the most advanced techniques with safe, biocompatible materials that give excellent results while ensuring minimal impact upon the body during treatment and into the future.

Dental wellness is unique in Brisbane as the only practice with two leading holistic Dentists. Our team works with like-minded health practitioners such as Chiropractors and Paediatric Orthodontists to encourage good upper and lower jaw development and nasal breathing habits to create positive effects for your child as they grow.

This report is intended to provide useful information for children of all ages and to help us ensure the next generation have **safer, healthy, beautiful smiles.**



**Xylitol** is mentioned throughout the following report and is a natural sugar that works very differently on the bacteria in your mouth than normal sugars do.

It inhibits the growth of the Streptococcus Mutan bacteria associated with tooth decay and does not ferment in the mouth. Xylitol actually has an alkalising effect neutralising acids and stimulating saliva production enabling the saliva to bring vital minerals to the teeth.

Xylitol can be found in tooth pastes, mints, chewing gums, in liquid gel form and comes as a granulated sugar for use in cooking.

## 0 - 2 years



Even in the last trimester of pregnancy it is important to eat healthy foods that support the development of your unborn child's baby teeth which are already forming at this stage. Essential fatty acids, protein and calcium / magnesium rich foods will help to optimise development.

We recommend a visit to a naturopath or Doctor to give you some dietary guidance and supplementation advice.

Eat healthy foods that support the development of your unborn child's baby teeth which are already forming at this stage

Breast milk contains vital proteins, vitamins and carbohydrates and is important in the development of a healthy immune system. The period of time you choose to breast feed your child is a personal choice and Dental wellness supports your choice.

It is important during this time that the mother maintains excellent nutrition and hydration as 'prolonged' breast feeding can deplete her of nutrients essential for the production of optimal breast-milk. Demand feeding can lead to milk sticking to the teeth, particularly at night, when your babies natural defence, saliva, is reduced.

The bacteria that causes tooth decay can also be transferred from Mother to Child in the first stages of life via kissing, food tasting and dummies.

These above habits can create an environment for disease in the young child's mouth. When indicated, Xylitol gel can be given orally after feeding to inhibit the bacteria that cause tooth decay and promote saliva to help naturally remineralise your baby's teeth.

## 2 - 6 years



At this stage, all baby teeth have developed and a combination of prevention, nutrition and parental care is needed. In particular, parental brushing and supervision of teeth cleaning is essential.

Young children should be encouraged to start to brush their own teeth after the parent has done the child's teeth first. Children's dexterity and fine motor skills are still developing at this point and they need this help and guidance.

**Nutrition and a healthy diet are important factors in maintaining a healthy mouth.**

Most people are aware the 'conventional' sugars can contribute to tooth decay. There are however many hidden sugars in the foods we eat and the timing of when we eat these foods can be important too.

Fruit in particular should be a part of a healthy diet but the belief that a diet with a high intake of fruit is especially healthy is not true. The natural sugars (fructose) and acids contained in fruit (both fresh and dried varieties), can feed the bacteria in the mouth. These then attack the tooth surface and can even lead to other systemic diseases which feed off sugars. As fruits are an essential part of a healthy diet, from a dental perspective, these foods are best reserved for main meal times rather than as snack foods in order to minimise the constant exposure of teeth to sugars and acids.

**Great tooth friendly snack food alternatives include, eggs, avocado, chickpeas, coconut, seeds and nuts** (if no allergy is indicated) which contain neither sugar or acid. Dairy based snacks (if no intolerance) while containing the mild sugar lactose, have a protective protein in them that helps keep teeth strong.

### when should my child first visit a dentist?

The exact timing of when your child's first dental visit should be varies based on circumstances particular to him/her. Generally speaking, by the age of 2-3 your child should have seen a dental practitioner. This is important due to the importance of ensuring an early positive relationship with a dentist and because many developmental conditions or diseases can be displayed early. Early diagnosis and, if required, early minimal intervention is essential to maintain a healthy mouth and a positive dental experience.

Regular dentist visits are also an important in maintaining a healthy and positive dental experience. The enamel that coats baby teeth is thinner than that of adult teeth and can therefore be more vulnerable to food acids, and small problem areas can become big very quickly.

### what happens at a young child's dental appointment?

This can vary depending on the child's needs or dental issues. Usually there is a visual check, sometimes a clean or even low dose digital x-rays if there is anything of particular concern identified. The use of digital xrays, where necessary, can help identify disease or infection that may be compromising your child's whole body health. Brushing and flossing techniques are usually explained depending on the individual needs of the child.

### what if my child has special needs?

If your child has been identified as special needs or higher care requirements, the dental management of children with higher care requirements can be complex both from home and in chair at the dental clinic. We recognise there are several hurdles for parents in terms of home care like the ability to brush and floss and obviously each child is different and a dental consultation is the best starting point to determine what the right advice is for your child.

At dental wellness we have two Oral Health Therapists Carrie and Michelle, and two holistic Dentists with a combined 50 years of holistic dental experience. Our Oral Health Therapists are University trained to assess and manage your children from the ages 4 - 17 and are also fully trained hygienists, undertaking ongoing professional development and registration similar to a general Dentists.

All hygiene visits for both children and adult clients are individually tailored to particular needs or dental issues. Professionally they both have experience with treating children of varied higher care needs. They are compassionate and extremely gentle practitioners who have been working with children for many years. Their role involves working alongside our Dentists to which they can refer to in the instances of more complex or 'out of the ordinary' cases.

## 6 - 10 years



Your child will begin to lose baby teeth and adult teeth will begin erupting. These 'mixed dentition' years can present dental problems due to a variety of contributing factors.

If your child has 'loose' or 'wiggly' front teeth, encourage children to wiggle them. Extremely loose, flapping teeth can pose a particular risk of being inhaled and parents need to be aware of the state of these teeth when the child is engaged in sport and physical activities.

Flossing of your child's teeth is extremely important as bacteria traps between the loosening teeth and erupting teeth and it is common to see sore gums at this time.

It is also at this age where assessment of the development of the upper and lower jaw is important. Habits such as thumb and finger sucking or prolonged pacifier use can cause distortion in the development of the upper arch of the mouth and adversely affect the positioning of adult teeth, and may result in protruding teeth, over bite or crowding and even speech difficulties and mouth breathing.

Most parents are unaware that these breathing patterns and also swallowing mechanics have a profound effect on overall development. Very often if nasal breathing is inhibited, the upper jaw bones and sinus area do not develop correctly which can lead to crowding of the erupting teeth and even make these children more prone to allergies, sinus infections and regular congestion. Mouth breathing also has long term implication for generalised inflammation in the mouth that can continue into adulthood.

The pH balance or acid / alkaline balance of the saliva in your child's mouth should be close to neutral. This is measured on a 0 - 14 scale, with 7 being neutral and below this being acidic and above being alkaline. When mouth breathing, saliva flow reduces, causing the pH balance to decrease and increasing the risk of cavities and gum problems occurring. Understanding the nature of the pH of saliva is important as it is an indicator of potential oral disease. The bacteria in our mouths thrive in an acidic environment and tooth enamel is shown to dissolve in lower pH environments.

### when should my child see an orthodontist?

Early orthodontic assessment often reduces the need for later more complex treatment. The age for orthodontic intervention and treatment varies dependent on things individual to your child including their particular orthodontic issue(s) and their physical, cognitive and emotional development. Some treatment can start as early as six and some can be left until adulthood.

### what types of orthodontic appliance will my child need?

The types of treatment or appliances used in orthodontic correction varies depending on the above factors and can also vary depending on the appliances the orthodontic practice offers.

Some appliances are designed to create space where there is crowding or a poorly developed jaw whereas some are designed to reduce poor functional habits such as thumb/finger sucking and encourage nasal breathing.

dental wellness has a number of like-minded clinicians that we refer to who offer a range of state of the art orthodontic options depending on what your child may need and what you feel comfortable with.



## 10 - 15 years



By 12 years of age your child should have lost all of their baby teeth or be close to it. For any remaining teeth, ongoing assessment is necessary by the Dentist or Oral Health Therapist to check for any abnormalities that may inhibit the natural eruption process of their adult teeth.

At this age range, if the child does not have a straight set of new adult teeth, a more definitive orthodontic opinion is often advised.

For active children, be aware that sports drinks and soft drinks which are full of sugar and very acidic (the low or zero sugar soft drinks are still very acidic).

With regards to maintaining pre-teen and teenagers oral health, it is strongly recommended that they adopt the life-long habit of flossing between the teeth and brushing twice daily with a Xylitol based toothpaste. If your child is wearing braces or other fixed orthodontic appliances they may not be able to floss so the saliva pH is very important. Xylitol products have a beneficial effect on alkalising saliva pH, inhibiting Strep. Mutans colonies and making teeth less sticky to plaque, thus reducing the risk of gum disease and cavities. Regular hygiene visits are essential at this point to check the health of the teeth and gums.

There is a high risk of enamel loss and cavities when these drinks become a regular habit. Water and supplementing with a nutritional electrolyte replacement drink such as Endura or coconut water, which optimises not only the health of their teeth but also aides their performance and recovery. One of the major problems with saliva flow is a lack of it.

Dehydration either through under consumption of appropriately mineralised fluids or through the effects of caffeine intake can lead to a dry mouth. Simply not drinking enough good quality water that is naturally high in minerals can lead to dehydration.



The reality is that kids should be hydrating before the commencement of the sporting activity and supplementing their water with **SCIENTIFICALLY PROVEN ELECTROLYTE** replacement or coconut water, which have minimal sugars and additives.

Sports in this age range also brings with it the highest risk of trauma to your child's front teeth. Skateboarding, cricket, hockey and all contact sport codes come with the dental industry recommendation of a professionally made mouth guard. The purpose of a mouth guard is to distribute any blow to the mouth from the point of contact across the whole upper jaw. Trauma to front teeth can be extremely costly with potentially life long dental and self-esteem issues.

As the jaw continues to develop and grow at these ages it is important to update the mouth guard with a new one every season or so to ensure a good fit.

'Chemist bought' mouth guard are often lower quality and aren't designed to fit properly and distribute the impact of trauma appropriately. A custom made sports guard made by a dentist or dental technician is the best chance your child has of avoiding the painful and costly lifelong issues associated with dental trauma.



## 16 - 20 years



With increasing independence and autonomy your child is in charge of maintaining their smile and general health.

Attitudes with regard to valuing the health and maintenance of our mouths are generally considered to be a learned behaviour, with children usually adopting the habits of their parents or carers. It is at this age range that reinforcing good hygiene habits with regular dental visits is recommended.

It is generally accepted that our SMILES are an essential asset and aid us in projecting confidence in our society.

Usually orthodontic work is concluding at this age and the wisdom teeth will begin erupting. It is important the eruption of these final teeth are monitored as they can impact on previous orthodontic work, and often come through on an angle or remain partially submerged due to lack of room in the mouth. The gums and surrounding teeth of partially erupted wisdom teeth need to be monitored at the dental surgery as it is very common for bacteria to stick to the hard to reach areas this situation produces, particularly just below the gum line. Wisdom teeth have the potential to create painful infection around them which can challenge a person's immune system so early identification of the possibility is recommended.

It is also common to notice white patches, or mottling, on the front teeth that can be caused by several things. Modern remineralisation techniques can often improve the look but the need for a resin based veneer over the tooth may be the best non-invasive cosmetic solution. With the use of this tooth-coloured resin we can also close any unsightly gaps or cover stained and mottled teeth.

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For teens and young adults who become aware of grinding their teeth or who suffer from tension headaches, Dental wellness can put clients in contact with like-minded practitioners who can provide nutritional advice, hormone balancing, supplementation and good hydration products to help alleviate the symptoms. TMJ or 'jaw joint' stress and overloading of the muscles of the head and neck can also be responsible. At Dental wellness, we can assess your child's bite and where necessary, recommended the fitting of a soft guard or hard splint to be worn at night to protect their smile from tooth wear associated with grinding and help reduce the stress in their head and neck causing pain and headaches.

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We hope that you have found this information helpful and look forward to welcoming you and your children to Dental wellness. To find out more about Dental wellness please refer to [www.dentalwellness.com.au](http://www.dentalwellness.com.au) or send a query to [reception@dentalwellness.com.au](mailto:reception@dentalwellness.com.au)

Keep Smiling - it's good for you!

Dr David Cowhig

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safer healthy beautiful smiles



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