

Improving the oral health of preschool children, with a focus on Māori, Pacific and low income families

The Problem

- ~56% of children aged 0-4 do not brush their teeth twice per day with fluoride toothpaste.
- **The affordability of toothbrushes and toothpaste is one of the barriers to good oral self care.**
- Inequities in oral health are persistent.
- Māori and Pacific adults and children, and those living in areas of high deprivation have significantly higher rates of tooth decay and poorer oral health than the general population.

The Opportunity

- Oral health status at age five predicts oral health status at age 26.
- The life stages from pregnancy through to early childhood are key for establishing good oral health behaviours and parents/caregivers are amenable to health promotion interventions.
- **Influencing tooth-brushing habits of pre-school children presents an opportunity because tooth brushing rates in this age demographic are so poor.**
- With a focus on Māori, Pacific and families living in poverty, there is an opportunity to address persistent and significant inequities in oral health outcomes.

What does the initiative involve?

1. **Social Marketing:** “Baby Teeth Matter/ Tooth Fairy Campaign” launched on 13 June 2021 – running through to August 2021.
2. **Free Product – 1 November 2021 launch:** Packs of toothbrushes and fluoride toothpaste (whānau packs) provided to preschoolers and their whānau, in particular to Māori, Pacific and families living in poverty – **paired with targeted oral health education.**

Delivery channels (for the free product and education)

1. **Via the Well Child Tamariki Ora (WCTO) Programme** – whānau packs given at 5-7 month, 9-12 month & 15-18 month contacts.
2. **Via other organisations/channels – as identified in the programme design phase** – Māori and Pacific health providers and community health organisations, so that we can opportunistically reach preschoolers that may need additional support and/or are not enrolled with a WCTO provider.

Will lead to...

Increase in twice daily tooth brushing by pre-school children

Increase in the utilisation of Community Oral Health (COHS) and reduced “Did Not Attend” for scheduled appointments

