

# ORAL HEALTH SCHOOL SCREENING

## Information for School Staff

### Frequently Asked Questions

**1. What is oral health screening?**

Oral health screening is a mandated program by the Ministry of Health. This screening consists of a quick visual oral assessment using a sterilized mouth mirror. Annually the Oral Health Team provides dental screening in all schools in Hastings and Prince Edward Counties. An oral health report card is sent home with the children to inform parents of any dental concerns.

**2. What do we expect to achieve through screening?**

- Recommend preventative services for eligible children.
- Help identify if a child needs emergency treatment.
- Prevent children from unnecessary suffering due to untreated and poor oral health.
- Assist low-income families to obtain financial assistance for oral health care through the Healthy Smiles Ontario program.

**3. How do we decide which grades to screen?**

Children in kindergarten may not have seen a dental care provider before and this screening ensures all kids get a first visit. Children in grade 2 have their first permanent molars (back teeth) and research indicates oral health status in grade 2 is a good reflection of overall oral health status of the school population. Therefore, grade 2 is selected as the sentinel grade to determine the school's intensity level, which is used to identify which other grades should be screened. Grades 4 and 7 will also be screened this year as the pandemic prevented the opportunity for dental screening during the past two years.

**4. Are any children, other than those in the specified grades, also screened?**

Yes. Selected students who presented with urgent treatment needs at the previous screening session. Also, parents of children in other grades may request their child be screened as well.

**5. What is the "re-screen" process?**

The re-screen process is a requirement of the provincial program and will help to ensure students in need of urgent care receive treatment. This process requires oral health staff to confirm, through an additional screening, whether dental treatment has been started before referring a child to Highland Shores Children's Aid for dental neglect. Minimal time is required with the student to re-screen and oral health staff will contact schools to notify when they will be coming back for a re-screen of students.

**6. Is the screening limited to those students who do not regularly see a dentist?**

We offer screening to all children, including those who do regularly see their dentist, as a means to collect oral health and surveillance data. This information is used for program planning, implementation, and evaluation.

**7. Is the consent required?**

Yes, informed consent is required in health care. However, “implied”, rather than “written” consent is accepted by the Ministry for school screening.

**8. How do we get “informed” consent from parents?**

It is required that parents are notified 10 business days before the oral health screening. Therefore, we request each school to send the details in the school newsletter, or through your regular parent communication process, prior to the scheduled screening date. We will provide the newsletter insert electronically. Notification allows parents the opportunity annually decline screening with a written note.

**9. How do we get “informed” consent from students?**

The screening process is described to the students by an oral health staff member prior to the screening session. No child is forced to participate.

**10. What should you do if a student does not want to go to the screening clinic?**

- Reinforce to the child that they will not be screened against his/her will.
- Encourage the student to attend the screening clinic and discuss any concerns with oral health staff.
- Advise staff if child does not want to participate.

**11. What is provided to those students who are: absent on the scheduled screenings date; excluded from the screening by their parent/caregiver; and/or, refuse to participate in the screening?**

Every student in the designated grades will receive an Oral Health Report Card containing educational messages and Public Health contact information, regardless of whether they participated in the screening.

**12. What infection control precautions are taken during my child’s dental screening?**

The Oral Health team adheres to all Infection Prevention and Control guidelines set by Public Health Ontario to protect everyone involved in the screening process. A different sterilized mirror is used for each child, and the Oral Health Team wear masks, face shields, gowns and gloves as deemed appropriate. Hand-sanitization is performed between each student.

**13. Where should I link parents to information about school screening?**

You should direct them to the Oral Health Program at Public Health for more information, or with any questions they may have.

#### 14. What resources does Public Health offer to assist with teaching about oral health in schools?

Teaching tools and curriculum support for oral health is available through OPHEA at <http://teachingtools.ophea.net> . There are also powerpoint presentations and curriculum support resources available on our website at <https://hpepublichealth.ca/oral-health-schools> .

#### **For more information contact Hastings Prince Edward Public Health**

613-966-5500 ext. 680 | Toll-free:1-800-267-2803 ext. 680 | TTY: 711 or 1-800-267-6511

*Hastings Prince Edward Public Health is situated and provides services on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee people.*

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