The Department of Health implements the oral health policies of the Hong Kong SAR Government through its Oral Health Education Unit (OHEU). The Unit is a dedicated team fully devoted to the promotion of oral health to the people of Hong Kong.

To promote oral health to the Hong Kong community, the OHEU employs two strategies: one is through target specific promotion programmes and second is through information giving means.

**Target Specific Oral Health Promotion Programmes**

Certain captive population groups are targeted for tailored oral health promotion programmes. These programmes are characterised by being age and setting specific. They have clear objectives and performance targets that measure either oral health gain or desirable behavioural changes.

The current programmes are the Love Teeth With Your Kids Programme, the Dandelion Oral Care Action and the Teens Teeth Programme.

**Love Teeth with Your Kids Programme**

Love Teeth With Your Kids Programme is targeted at the 3-5 year-old children studying in the local kindergartens and nurseries organised respectively by the Education Bureau and Social Welfare Department. The Programme aims to i) increase the percentage of children brushing their teeth with fluoride toothpaste twice daily and ii) increase the percentage of parents providing supplementary toothbrushing for their children every evening. The programme has been evaluated to demonstrate statistically significant increase in the oral care habits among the children as well as the parents as the set objectives in the past three consecutive years. It has since been placed on a long term implementation.

The Programme is implemented in all kindergartens and nurseries with the cooperation of the teachers. The participating schools are given education materials by the OHEU, which include a teacher’s manual for every teacher, a student handbook and a VCD for every child in the school and some posters for the school to promote the Programme. Having acquired these materials, the schools designate a 6-week period to conduct the toothbrushing activity school-wide. The children are encouraged to watch the cartoon story in the VCD and follow the instructions in the VCD to participate in the activity. They are required to have the parent check off their toothbrushing, including the supplementary toothbrushing habits at home, and sign off in the handbook everyday. Should they have performed the required toothbrushing activities at home, they are awarded with stickers and certificates according to their level of compliance to the requirements. There are two types of awards: one for Self Care for the child’s independent effort and one for Love Kids for the parent’s supplementary toothbrushing effort.

The entire Programme is sustained on voluntary participation of the children, the parents and the teachers. Nonetheless, we have consistently over 600 schools with around 100,000 children participating every year. Positive feedback from parents appraising that the Programme has been successful in helping children establish a good toothbrushing habit is often received.

**Dandelion Oral Care Action**

The Dandelion Oral Care Action is an oral health promotion programme for the mild and moderate intellectual disabled children in the special schools. It is a school programme based on the systematic toothbrushing and flossing techniques developed in collaboration with the Po Leung Kuk Centenary School, a special school for the moderate intellectual disabled children in 2004-05 academic year.

The systematic toothbrushing technique is easy for the special children to learn and easy for the teachers to teach. The entire toothbrushing process is broken down into many small and achievable steps, which are...
grouped into 5 stages with 36 groups of teeth to brush. The flossing technique also follows the sequence adopted in toothbrushing. The flossing of two approximal surfaces in the same interdental space is considered one group. The children are taught the technique by Stages and by groups. They are required to be proficient with what they have already learned before they progress to the next group or stage. They must acquire the toothbrushing skill fully before they learn the flossing technique. Both techniques are taught to and learned by all the teachers, parents and children in the school to create a supporting environment for the children to master the skill.

The Dandelion Programme objectives are defined with short term and long term goals. It is targeted to reduce the visible plaque or the bacterial film, accumulated on the children's teeth in the short term of one to two years. The long term goal is for the child who has been through the entire schooling of 12 years. He is expected to be able to brush and floss his own teeth competently and independently by the time he leaves school.

The Programme is implemented in a train-the-trainer approach. The OHEU trains the school nurse and at least one teacher from each school to be the Oral Health Trainers (OHT). The OHTs learn some basic oral care knowledge and the two oral care techniques, which are practised on the manikin first, then on the children until they have fully mastered the skills. They, in turn, train all the teachers in the school in the same manner. They also conduct workshops to train the parents, who are expected to brush and floss for their children twice a day at home using the same techniques.

The Programme was successfully launched and adopted in all special schools with moderate intellectual disabled children in 2005-07. OHTs have been trained. The oral care skill has become part of the self-care curriculum of the schools. The parents who participated on voluntary basis have found their toothbrushing and flossing skills for their children improved. Then in 2007-08, it was launched in schools with mild intellectual disabled children. Currently, all the 20 schools in Hong Kong subscribe to the Dandelion Programme. Systematic evaluation for the achievement of objectives will begin in 2008-09. Various evaluation parameters will be measured annually or bi-annually over the next 12 years.

**Teens Teeth Programme**

The Teens Teeth is a school-based programme employing a peer-led approach in promotion of oral health to the F.1 students. Its objectives are to i) reduce the condition of gingival bleeding ii) improve their flossing habit in the intervention students.

The participating school sends ten F.4 students to be trained as peer leaders. After having undergone a week-long leadership training, they are commissioned to promote oral health to all the F.1 students in the school. They are required to organise any activities to achieve the objectives of the Teens Teeth Programme within the academic year. Throughout the year, they are supported emotionally by the peer mentors who are the ex-peer leaders and professionally by the dentist mentors who are volunteer private dental practitioners. The OHEU, however, provides material support.

A randomised controlled trial was conducted in 2005-06 on five pairs of intervention and control schools with sampled F.1 students to test the effectiveness of the Teens Teeth Programme. Comparing to the control, the results showed that there was a 7% reduction in gingival bleeding and a 7% increase in the number of students flossing more than 3 times a week. Both results were statistically significant.

As the success of the Programme demands intensive provision for the peer leaders, it cannot be implemented on a massive scale. A maximum of ten schools per year could be served with the current resources. Nonetheless, experience with the past five batches of peer leaders shows that they have been thoroughly committed to the promotion of oral health to the people around them ever since the one-year commission. The number of people who will benefit from these life-long promoters is probably immeasurable.
Information Giving

Information on all aspects of oral health for the knowledge of the general public is given through the Love Teeth Campaigns, the public education services and other education resources such as the website and hotline, education materials and printed information.

Love Teeth Campaigns
Since 2003, the OHEU has launched annual Love Teeth Campaigns with a specific theme every year. The Campaigns employ a media publicity approach to strategically reach the non-captive adult population, which composes of half of the people of Hong Kong. Specific thematic messages are typically delivered through TV commercials, TV programmes, MTR posters, newspapers, radio programmes; etc. Sometimes, a joint promotion programme with the dental profession or a community organisation is organised as part of the campaign publicity.

Telephone survey evaluations show that there has been a slow but steady increase in the number of people taking up the flossing and dental check-up/professional teeth cleaning habits over the years. Though the awareness of periodontal disease was raised but the awareness of specific knowledge about the disease fluctuated with the forcefulness of the messages given.

Public Education Services
The OHEU operates routine public education services to targets upon requests in the following:

Brighter Smiles Playland
During the school year, 4 year-old children groups book the Brighter Smiles Playland for a one-hour play-learning activity programme led by a Dental Therapist. The Playland is located in Argyle Street Jockey Club School Dental Clinic in Mongkok.

Oral Health Senior Hall
In July and August, when schools are out of session, the Brighter Smiles Playland is turned into an Oral Health Senior Hall facility. The OHEU runs a one-hour interactive programme for the elder groups at the Senior Hall.

Oral Health Promotion Bus
The Oral Health Promotion Bus is equipped with information kiosks and individually paced self-learning oral simulation laboratory for the practice and drill of correct toothbrushing and dental flossing techniques. The bus is stationed throughout the territory for walk-in access by the public or at primary schools upon booking for student groups.

Oral Health Talks
The dental officers or dental therapists of the OHEU deliver tailored target specific talks on oral health in accordance to the audience’s needs to community groups upon requests.

Education Resources
Oral health education resources are developed for free access by the public through multiple channels. They are the:

Toothclub Website
The toothclub website: www.toothclub.gov.hk, contains all the information about oral health for the entire general population in any age groups. The information are organised in three zones: the family campus, the teens guide and the adults zone. All the information is presented interactively with graphics for browsing in pleasure and leisure. There is other information about the services provided by OHEU.

For registered organisation users, they can access to book or apply for all the public education services through the website.

Recorded Hotline
The recorded messages allow the access to oral health information by those who are not familiar with the internet but are more familiar with the phone and fax. The messages are informative but some are interestingly presented to give pleasure to the listeners. Fax information could be acquired through the hotline system.

Education Materials
Education materials such as videos, games, exhibits and models are developed for free loan to organisations and dentists. They are handy materials for setting up small scale oral health education activities by students, volunteers; etc.

Printed Materials
About 50 titles of posters and pamphlets are printed for free distribution to organisations, doctors and dentists. They can place their orders online through the toothclub website and come to collect them for their clients within a week.

Future Development
The OHEU is still exploring new ways to reach the unattended targets effectively. We also stay abreast with technological development in the provision of information for public education. We welcome any suggestions and opinions to better promote oral health to our community.