

Kidshelp Kambodscha Newsletter

Khemara Kidshelp School - Oral Health Day – 7th April 2025 – Sponsored by Kidshelp Kambodscha and The Elsevier Foundation

World Oral Health Day is observed every year on 20th March, to raise awareness of the issues around oral health and the importance of oral hygiene. In 2024 the Kidshelp/Elsevier, Diabetes Management Project team had been invited to support the University Puthisastra (UP) program to highlight the links between high levels of sugar consumption and poor oral health but last-minute changes at UP meant the program had to be cancelled. One of the team, who does part time modelling, told us that when she was a 15-year-old student at KKS, a group of dentists visited and taught her how to brush her teeth. It was the first time anyone had explained to her the importance of oral health which now, plays an important part in her work in modelling.

We began planning a Khemara Kidshelp School, 2025 Oral Health Day program and chose 7th April as it was the first day of the state school holidays, around Khmer New Year. It meant all students would be able to make it to their KKS classes on time.

We asked Phon Punreay and Kam Sreyneat, who are now, thanks to the support of Kidshelp scholarships, qualified dentists, working in Phnom Penh, if they would support the idea. We met during our visit in January 2025, and planning began from there.



There are 3 class sessions at KKS every day, with classes starting at 1:00pm, 3:00pm and 5:00pm. Around 200 of the 325 children attend the 5:00pm classes, so Punreay and Sreyneat invited some of their colleagues to help in organising the sessions. Sreyneat was able to borrow posters and tooth models from UP and Khemara was tasked with purchasing 325 toothbrushes, 325 tubes of toothpaste, a momentum gift for every student and extra prizes for every student who volunteered to be a class model on the day.

They team arrived at KKS just after 1:00pm to big smiles.



Tooth models and posters borrowed from University Puthisastra.

The schedule for every session was the same, although it was adjusted, depending on the ages of the children. Topics covered, importance of oral hygiene, effects of diet on oral health and how to prevent cavities and gum disease. The dentists also showed proper tooth brushing techniques.

One or two children from every session were invited to volunteer to demonstrate, using the tooth models, the techniques learned, whilst the whole class helped them to count down the brushing in each area. Every child left with their own toothbrush, a tube of toothpaste, a gift, a big smile and lots of information that will help them care for their oral health, for years to come.



There is already a plan to introduce a program on hand washing at KKS in May 2025, and following that, we plan to organise a poster design competition promoting both oral hygiene and hand washing, which we will later roll out in the community.