

ADA NSW POSITION ON THE ORAL HEALTH OF NSW CHILDREN

State of oral health

Tooth decay is a preventable disease that affects a large proportion of NSW children, with disadvantaged groups experiencing higher levels of tooth decay. Approximately 40% of primary school children in NSW have experienced tooth decay by 5 years of age, increasing to around 50% of children by age 9 years¹.

Waiting lists for public dental treatment remain long², and hospitalisation rates for preventable dental conditions in children are high³.

More than 50% of 2-3 year olds and 40% of 6-7 year olds in NSW are brushing their teeth less than twice a day. More than 85% of 2-3 year olds and 45% of 6-7 year olds in NSW have not visited the dentist in the past 12 months⁴.

ADA NSW Position

With a large percentage of NSW children being affected by tooth decay, it is clear that efforts must continue to promote oral health, with a focus on prevention. Successful management of decay in children relies on the early identification of the disease, followed by co-operative management and monitoring with the family to change identified risks and behaviours.

ADA NSW recommends that a child's first dental check should occur by their first birthday, followed by regular dental checks to monitor oral health, growth and development.

Dental services should be accessible to all children, so ADA NSW supports the Child Dental Benefits Schedule, which provides government funding for dental treatment for eligible children within a private dental setting. Additionally, ADA NSW believes priority should be given to groups with high oral health needs¹.

ADA NSW recognises that early childhood may represent an important time for decay development⁵ and supports early childhood as a priority population for Oral Health 2020⁶.

ADA NSW supports the National Oral Health Plan's strategy to strengthen and embed nutrition and oral health practices and policies in key settings such as early childhood, education and health services⁷.

adansw.com.au

ADA NSW supports the Australian Medical Association recommendation⁸ for government to prohibit food advertising to children and introduce a tax on sugar sweetened beverages in efforts to improve the nutrition and eating habits and oral health of Australians.

Facts:

- Approximately 40% of primary school children in NSW have experienced tooth decay in baby teeth by 5 years of age, increasing to around 50% of children by age 9 years¹
- By 12 years of age, around 35% of children in NSW experienced tooth decay in adult teeth¹
- A small percentage of children experience the highest amount of tooth decay, more than 3 times the average for the age group¹
- Disadvantaged groups including those of low socioeconomic status, in remote and very remote areas, and Aboriginal children, experience higher amounts of tooth decay¹
- As of June 2017, a total of 13,555 children were on the NSW public dental treatment waiting list, including 8,136 who have been assessed and are waiting for treatment²
- 58.7% of 2-3 year olds and 41.4% of 6-7 year olds in NSW brush their teeth less than twice a day⁴
- 85.8% of 2-3 year olds and 45.8% of 6-7 year olds in NSW did not use dental services in the past 12 months⁴
- Young children have the highest rates of preventable hospitalisations due to dental conditions, with a total of 13,504 hospitalisations of Australian children aged 5-9 years for potentially preventable dental conditions between 2013-2014³
- In 2015-16 there were 2027 potentially preventable hospitalisations for dental conditions in NSW among children aged 0 to 4 years and 3826 among children aged 5 to 9 years⁹
- NSW had the highest proportion of children aged 5 to 14 who had never visited the dentist (15.6%, compared with 11% nationally)¹⁰
- 46% of children in NSW had not visited a dentist before the age of five¹⁰
- The period between 18 and 40 months of age may be a significant period for the development of tooth decay, with rapid development of new tooth decay. This is also a critical time for preventive intervention, to stop or reverse early disease before fillings are required⁵
- The most recent report on Child Health from the NSW Population Health Survey, indicated that half of children aged 2–8 years and three quarters of children aged 9–15 years consumed sugary drinks (soft drinks, cordials or sports drinks) weekly.¹¹
- Early childhood tooth decay is a predictor of future tooth decay in adolescence and adulthood¹²

adansw.com.au

References

1. The NSW Child Dental Health Survey 2007, Centre For Oral Health Strategy NSW, 2009
2. NSW Health <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/oralhealth>. Accessed 7 November, 2017
3. Oral health and dental care in Australia: key facts and figures 2015. AIHW: Chrisopoulos S, Harford JE & Ellershaw A 2016. Cat. no. DEN 229. Canberra: AIHW.
4. State level differences in the oral health of Australian preschool and early primary school-age children, Blinkhorn et al, Australian Dental Journal, 2011; 56: 56-62
5. Natural history of dental caries in very young Australian children, Gussy et al, International Journal of Paediatric Dentistry, 2016; 26: 173-183
6. Oral Health 2020: A Strategic Framework for Dental Health in NSW, Centre for Oral Health Strategy, 2013
7. Healthy Mouths, Healthy Lives: Australia's National Oral Health Plan 2015-2024, Coag Health Council 2015
8. AMA <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/nutrition-2018> Accessed 16 January 2018
9. NSW Health <http://www.healthstats.nsw.gov.au>. Accessed 7 November, 2017
10. Oral health of Australian children: the National Child Oral Health Study 2012–14. Do LG & Spencer AJ (Editors). Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press.
11. NSW Health <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/health/Publications/soft-drinks-report.pdf> Accessed 16 January 2018
12. NSW Early Childhood Oral Health Program Evaluation, Centre for Oral Health Strategy NSW, 2010

adansw.com.au

Australian Dental Association
NSW Branch ABN 34 000 021 232

Address
L1, 1 Atchison Street,
St Leonards NSW 2065

Phone
02 8436 9900

Email
adansw@adansw.com.au