

MEDIA RELEASE

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ADA NSW CALLS ON PATIENTS TO USE DENTAL BENEFITS

With cost-of-living pressures still a concern for many, the Australian Dental Association NSW (ADA NSW) is urging NSW patients with most private health insurance (PHI) dental benefits having a “use it or lose it” policy before the cut-off date of 31 December 2023. Research shows the link between our oral health key and overall health, so the ADA NSW is reminding those with health insurance cover for dental treatment that now is the time to use these benefits.

“Prevention is better than a cure and your dentist can be vital in detecting for example, undiagnosed health conditions such as gum disease. Prioritise that dental check-up before the summer break. Patients with private health insurance premiums should maximise the value out of private insurance cover which includes dental check-ups,” said ADA NSW President Dr Dominic Aouad.

Every year in Australia there are about 70,000 potentially preventable hospitalisations due to dental conditions, underlining what happens if you don’t look after your teeth.

Most Private Health Insurance (PHI) funds have dental benefits that may expire on December 31. If these are not taken up by year-end, patients and their teeth will be left without the care they have paid insurance for.

“Patients may have delayed making that annual oral health check-up or have forgotten they have outstanding benefits under their policies. Dental check-ups and preventive care like scaling and cleaning are part of keeping good oral health. It is essential that if patients require treatment this is booked in and completed before the end of the year so they can maximise the use of their PHI.

In 2020–21, private health insurance funds paid around \$2.2 billion in net benefits¹.

In addition to private health patients, the ADA NSW says the 31 December deadline applies to eligible families who can access the Child Dental Benefits Schedule (CDBS). The CDBS provides Medicare-funded dental treatment of up to \$1,052 and it goes up again next January 2023/24. This covers two calendars, for eligible children aged zero to 17 over a two-year period. It covers various treatments, including examinations, x-rays, cleaning, fissure sealing, fillings, root canals, and extractions. It can’t be carried into next year.

“Tooth decay remains the most common disease in childhood, but we know that about 1 in 4 Australian children aged 12-17 haven’t seen their dentist over the last 12 months,” Dr Aouad added.

Only about a third of eligible Australian children are currently accessing the CDBS, however, there is little awareness about the scheme. The CDBS could be better promoted by the Federal Government, according to the ADA NSW.

Parents can check their children’s eligibility for the CDBS and balance through their Medicare online account via www.my.gov.au

- **Ends**

¹ Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

About: ADA NSW is the peak body representing dentists and dental students in NSW and the ACT, with about 5,000 members. We have been supporting dentists and promoting good oral health in the community since 1929.

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