

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## TIME TICKING FOR NSW PATIENTS TO USE DENTAL BENEFITS

The Australian Dental Association NSW (ADA NSW) is urging NSW patients with private health insurance (PHI) dental benefits to “use it or lose it” before the cut-off date of 31 December 2022. Noting that many patients may need to catch up on their regular oral health care assessment routine since the COVID19 lockdowns of the past few years, leading to undiagnosed health conditions such as gum disease.

‘Prevention is better than a cure, so if you haven’t had your dental check-up this year, move it to the top of your list. You’ve paid for your private health insurance premiums, there is still time to get value out of your insurance cover, especially with rising costs of living and the usual expenses around Christmas and summer holidays for many people,’ said ADA NSW Vice President Dr Dominic Aouad,

‘Although it’s the busiest time of year, neglecting your oral health can lead to serious and long-term problems. Ensure that you are prioritising your health. There is nothing better than enjoying the festive season with your loved ones while sharing a happy and healthy smile,’ he added.

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.

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

“Patients may have delayed or cancelled dental appointments since 2020 due to COVID-19 and may 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 maximize the use of their PHI.

“We know that net dental benefits paid by private health insurance funds were about \$2bn in 2017-18 – that’s a lot of dental treatment. With oral health key to good overall health, we’re reminding those with health insurance cover for dental treatment that now is the time to follow it up – before it’s too late.”

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 \$1,026 over 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 is 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 it, however, as there is little awareness about the scheme, and it 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](http://www.my.gov.au)

**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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