



Stay well

Promoting
regular oral health
assessments

Key messages

- Children should have an oral health assessment by age 2. This can be done by a Maternal and Child Health nurse, family doctor, dentist or other oral health professional.
- Children should continue to have regular oral health assessments after the age of 2 as advised by their oral health professional.

Rationale

Tooth decay that affects children is entirely preventable. Prevention for children includes the first oral health assessment and continuing regular checks. By two years of age all children should have an oral health assessment. The first signs of tooth decay in children often go unnoticed by families and carers. Early detection of oral health problems is important.

Evidence

Regular oral health assessments are important for oral health (Thompson *et al.*, 2010). Children should have an oral health assessment by age 2. Everyone has different oral health needs and risk levels which should be reflected in the frequency of check-up (National Oral Health Promotion Clearing House, 2011). A UK study concluded that the frequency of visits should be based on individual risk assessment, therefore the *Oral health messages for the Australian public* recommend talking with your oral health professional about your risk level and how often you should book a check up.

Children from families with no health insurance and who are concession card holders generally have poorer oral health outcomes and are less likely to have regular dental visits. Approximately 70 per cent of Australian preschool aged children have never had a dental visit (Harford & Luzzi, 2013).

Advice for families about oral health checks

Having your child's teeth checked

Who performs an oral health assessment?

Oral health professionals that may conduct oral health assessments include:

- Dentists
- Oral health therapists
- Dental therapists.



Other professionals who may conduct an oral health assessment include:

- Maternal and child health nurses through the Key Ages and Stages Framework (at the 8 months, 18 months and 3.5 year visits).
- General practitioners or practice nurses.

It is important that families discuss the frequency of oral health checks with their child's dentist or other oral health professional. Each child will have different oral health needs and risk levels.

What can families and carers do?

Families and carers of children can regularly check their child's teeth by simply looking in their mouth for early signs of tooth decay. If concerned they should see their oral health professional to the 'What does tooth decay look like?' section on [page 11](#).

Accessing public dental services

Dental Health Services Victoria (DHSV) is the leading public oral health agency in Victoria. There are more than 80 community dental clinics located throughout metropolitan Melbourne and rural Victoria. To access general dental, denture or specialist dental care through the public dental system, a person must be eligible.

General eligibility criteria for children

All children aged 0–12 years are eligible for general dental care through any of the public dental clinics across Victoria.

No waiting lists for children

All children (0–12 years) have priority access, which means there is no waiting list, and they will receive the next available appointment.

What are the costs for public dental care for children?

Children who are government concession card holders or dependents of concession card holders do not pay a fee. All other children will need to pay a small fee (approximately \$30). However, from the 1 January 2014, the Child Dental Benefits Schedule provides up to \$1000 over 2 years for children aged 2–17 (see below for more information about the Child Dental Benefits Schedule).

How to access public dental services

Public dental clinics can be found at

<https://www.dhsv.org.au/clinic-locations/community-dental-clinics>

and searching for your postcode.

Accessing Private dental services

The Australian Dental Association can provide names of most private dentists.

Visit www.ada.org.au and go to 'find a dentist'. Private dentists are also listed in the Yellow Pages online www.yellowpages.com.au.

The Child Dental Benefits Schedule

The Child Dental Benefits Schedule (CDBS) is a dental benefits program for eligible children aged 2–17 years that provides up to \$1,000 in benefits to the child for basic dental services.

Eligibility is based on the following criteria:

- children aged between 2–17 years on any one day of the calendar year
- receive, or their family, guardian or carer receives, certain government benefits such as Family Tax Benefit Part A for at least part of the calendar year
- are eligible for Medicare.

Dental treatments that receive a benefit under the CDBS include: examinations, x-rays, cleaning, fissure sealing, fillings, root canals, extractions and partial dentures. Services can be provided in a public or private setting. Benefits do not cover orthodontic or cosmetic dental work and cannot be paid for any services provided in a hospital.

Families can confirm their child's eligibility and balance amount by accessing their Medicare online account at my.gov.au or by calling the Medicare general enquiries line on 132 011. When making an appointment for a child, the family should let the dental clinic know that they are eligible for CDBS. At the time of the appointment, the dental provider must discuss the child's treatment and any associated costs with the family before providing the services. Following this discussion the family will be asked to sign a consent form.

Once the dental provider has provided the services agreed upon for the child, they will either bulk bill the family or charge them for the services. If the dental provider does not bulk bill, the family will need to pay upfront then claim the benefit through Medicare. For more information about claiming through Medicare visit www.dhs.gov.au.

CDBS in the public dental system

- CDBS is available at all public dental clinics across Victoria.
- There are no out of pocket costs (bulk billed through Medicare).

CDBS and private dentists

Families who choose to use a private dentist should ask about the CDBS at that clinic. Questions to ask include:

- Does the clinic offer bulk billing?
- What are the fees?
- Will there be a gap payment?

Some private dentists may charge more than the scheduled fee. In these cases there will be a gap for the family to pay.