



The Royal Australasian
College of Physicians

Child Oral Health

Wednesday 22 August, 2012

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians' (RACP) Paediatric & Child Health Division (P&CHD) notes that improved access to dental services for children and young people is essential to address one of the biggest healthcare inequities in Australia and New Zealand, according to leading paediatricians.

Addressing oral health in children and young people can significantly improve lifelong oral health, which is a key determinant of health and wellbeing throughout the life of the individual.

Untreated dental decay in 15 to 24 year-olds accounts for 25 per cent of the disease experience in this age group. Furthermore, 18.5 per cent of 15 to 24 year-olds have at least one tooth missing due to dental disease.^{i ii}

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and Māori children and children living in rural and regional areas are more likely to have tooth decay, have less frequent check-ups and have fewer preventative treatments compared to children living in urban areas.

A universal dental scheme for children would be a significant move towards addressing the health impacts of disadvantage on children, and would prevent dental problems becoming a major health concern in adulthood.

Public water fluoridation, a proven cost-effective and equitable intervention can improve oral health outcomes across all sections of society.

The RACP released a position paper relating to oral health in children and young people in May at the Annual Congress, available on the [RACP website](#).

The RACP is working with the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons on the development of a joint statement on child oral health.

Ends

About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP): The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 13,500 physicians – often referred to as medical specialists – and 5,000 trainees, across Australia and New Zealand. The College represents more than 32 medical specialties including paediatrics & child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology and public health medicine, occupational & environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation medicine and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients. www.racp.edu.au

ⁱ Neumann, AS et al. Impact of an oral health intervention on pre-school children <3 years of age in a rural setting in Australia. *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health* 2011; 47(6):367-372.

ⁱⁱ Jamieson, LM, Armfield, JM & Roberts-Thomson KF. The role of location in Indigenous and non-Indigenous child oral health. *Journal of Public Health Dentistry* 2006; 66:123-130.