



AUSTRALIAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION INC.

MEDIA RELEASE

Dr Neil Hewson, Federal President

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ADA CALLS FOR A NATIONAL ADVERTISEMENT CAMPAIGN TO EDUCATE PARENTS ABOUT DENTAL HYGIENE

The Australian Dental Association (ADA) is calling for TV advertising campaigns, similar to those for smoking and skin cancer, to warn about the dangers of tooth decay and gum disease. The need for this measure follows the release of new figures which indicate that there is a current 'epidemic' of child tooth decay in Australia.

In a recent study, it was found that 48% of children suffered from untreated tooth decay, but only 10% had seen a dentist. This means that almost half of Australian children under the age of four are suffering from untreated tooth decay.

President of the Australian Dental Association (ADA), Dr Neil Hewson said "children start losing their first set of teeth from about the age of six and lose all of them by 12. However, these baby teeth are important for long term dental health. A child's primary teeth are as important to them as their permanent teeth. Baby or primary teeth help a young child to learn to chew and speak properly, and importantly, these teeth reserve the correct space in a child's gums for the 'eruption' of their permanent teeth when they are older".

He said "the consumption of sugary and /or acidic drinks and snacks aimed at children is largely to blame. We need to educate the community and ensure that parents are teaching their children how to look after their teeth early in life. So advertising campaigns are needed to reinforce the message". Also "tooth decay is a disease and needs to be treated as such. It is one of the most common and preventable diet related diseases. It needs to be understood that prevention is achievable and better than a cure".

There are a number of activities and initiatives the ADA has undertaken to educate the community at large about oral health such as the 'let's talk baby teeth' campaign and the annual 'Dental Health Week'. The ADA's website also contains information about these and a variety of other fact sheets and information (visit www.ada.org.au).

To maintain good oral health the ADA recommends that you:

1. keep sugary snacks to a minimum;
2. you chewing gum to stimulate saliva flow and protect teeth from decay;
3. follow a diet high in fruit and vegetables and contains dairy, where possible;
4. minimise consumption of sugary, high acid soft and sports drinks and fruit juices;
5. if these beverages are consumed, follow with a glass of water (preferably fluoridated tap water);
6. maintain good oral hygiene by brushing, flossing and rinsing your mouth with a fluoridated mouth rinse; and
7. visit your dentist regularly, rather than waiting for a problem to occur.

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The Australian Dental Association Inc. (ADA) is the peak national professional body representing about 10,000 registered dentists, who are the vast majority of dental care providers. ADA members work in both the public and private sectors. The primary objectives of the ADA are to encourage the improvement of the oral and general health of the public and to promote the ethics, art and science of dentistry and to support members of the Association in enhancing their ability to provide safe, high quality professional oral care.