

MEDIA RELEASE
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Thursday 26th July 2007



The Fluoride Generation: maintaining teeth for life

Young Australians are among members of the 'fluoride' generation who are enjoying greatly reduced tooth decay compared to previous generations.

Decay rates in 15-24 year olds have experienced a 46 percent reduction when compared to a person in the same age group in 1987-88.¹ However, Australia's young adults seem to be riding a wave of optimism when it comes to maintaining their oral health, with only just over half reporting visiting a dentist over a 12-month period.²

South Australian President of the Australian Dental Association (ADA-SA), Dr. Mark Hutton says that reduced decay rates may be creating a sense of optimism in young Australians.

"The impact of water fluoridation on oral health is significant when compared to previous generations. Today, young Australians can expect to retain all of their natural teeth across their lifetime. With this comes the need to maintain good, preventive oral health practices," says Dr Hutton.

Without a high standard of oral hygiene and a sensible healthy diet, the ADA says that, even with the added benefits of water fluoridation, decay rates may again begin to rise.

It is also important to keep gums healthy by brushing twice daily, flossing, and rinsing with a mouthwash.

"There is research that now points to a correlation between periodontal (gum) disease and cardiovascular disease. The message to the 'fluoride' generation is to ensure that the teeth they are now retaining, remain healthy for the duration of their life and that the teeth are supported by pink, healthy gums," says Dr Hutton.

In 2007, the ADA is investing in a community oral health promotion campaign targeting 18-25 year olds and their specific oral health needs. This includes general tips on good oral health practices as well as specific information on care for wisdom teeth, the pros and cons of 'cosmetic' dentistry and the impact of acute stress on oral health.

Cosmetic Dentistry

The search for a celebrity smile has meant an added interest and demand for 'cosmetic' dentistry procedures. The ADA is reinforcing what these procedures are designed to do, and stressing that good oral hygiene practices are the best way to ensure a healthy, beautiful smile.

Wisdom Teeth

Wisdom teeth, so named because they appear much later than other teeth, have an uncanny way of erupting at around the same time that people are planning their first overseas sojourn.

¹ Australia's dental generations - The National Survey of Adult Oral Health 2004-06

² 2002 National Dental Telephone Interview Survey indicated only 53% of this age group had attended a dental visit in the previous 12 months.

Impacted teeth are a common problem and are usually due to gums covering the wisdom tooth or hard tissues like teeth or bone preventing the teeth erupting successfully into the mouth.

Rather than risking a toothache half way around the world, the ADA recommends getting wisdom teeth assessed prior to any extended travel.

Stress and impact on mouth

Anecdotal reports suggest an increase in young adults presenting with stress related oral conditions, often timed with exams. Caffeine and energy drink fuelled study sessions, poor diet and oral hygiene habits, fatigue and tension related jaw clenching all contribute to the risk of stress related oral health conditions.

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The ADA is offering a range of advice to young Australians on maintaining a healthy mouth during Dental Health Week (July 30 – August 3). Visit www.ada.org.au for more information on good oral health tips.

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