



NEWS RELEASE

Tuesday 27th July, 2010

KINDY DENTAL SCREENINGS TO TACKLE RISING DECAY RATES

The Australian Dental Association South Australia (ADASA) today officially launched a new oral health education program in kindergartens, including on-site dental screenings as a way of tackling rising decay rates in children.

Almost half of Australian children under four suffer untreated decay and the decay rates in children entering school are on the rise. Between 1996 and 2006, there was a 50 per cent increase in children's dental disease in five year olds.

ADASA spokesperson and developer of the Kindy Oral Health Education and Screening Program, Dr Angelo Papageorgiou, said early intervention and education were vital to improving the oral health of Australian children.

"Our aim is to improve the oral health of children entering school," he said.

"Just in the pilot program, a third of children screened required some form of dental treatment. Twelve per cent were classified as requiring urgent dental treatment.

"These statistics are incredibly alarming. In our opinion, rising decay rates can be largely attributed to the increased consumption of sugary, acidic drinks and snacks.

"Evidence shows that children living in communities without fluoride in their tap water, Aboriginal children and children from lower socio-economic areas are much more likely to show early signs of decay.

"Parents and carers need to be aware that decay can begin early, often before a child's first birthday, because of things like the use of nursing bottles containing sugary drinks.

"The kindy program is run for children but parents are encouraged to attend. Parents will obviously be informed if their child requires treatment.

The ADASA started running its kind program as a pilot in April and has so far visited 15 kindergartens and screened more than 500 children.

The program has been rigorously tested and will now be broadened to become available to more kindergartens over the next 12 months.

The program is run by volunteer dentists from the ADASA. Each kindergarten visited receives an oral health education class with kids getting tips on keeping their teeth and

gums healthy, a healthy diet, what to expect when visiting a dentist and how to play safe to avoid dental injuries.

Each kindergarten visit is run over one or two weeks depending upon the number of children and the dentist's availability.

"The ADASA has recruited a team of volunteer dentists, which we hope to grow over the next year in order to reach as many kindergartens as possible," said Dr Papageorgiou.

"At present, we're only able to visit kindergartens in metropolitan Adelaide but we hope to extend the program to regional centres."

Information gathered through the screenings will be shared with the kindergarten, Department of Education and Children's Services and the SA Dental Service.

The data will be used to monitor and respond to trends in the oral health of South Australian children.

For more information about the program or to book a visit, kindergartens should contact the Australian Dental Association South Australia on 08 8272 8111.

ISSUED BY HUGHES PUBLIC RELATIONS:

Simon Hatcher on 0419 780 071 or simon@hughespr.com.au