

# Australia fails its oral health check-up

**\*\*UNDER STRICT EMBARGO UNTIL 12.01AM TUESDAY 20 MARCH 2018\*\***

To coincide with World Oral Health Day, the Australian Dental Association (ADA) and Australian Health Policy Collaboration (AHPC) at Victoria University is releasing a **world first** – a national oral health report card that reveals that more than 90% of Australian adults have experienced decay in their permanent teeth.

*Australia's Oral Health Tracker* (the latest report in the [Australia's Health Tracker](#) series) establishes vital links between oral health and general overall health.

*Australia's Oral Health Tracker* reveals that:

- Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease in Australia.
- Three out of four children and young people are consuming too much sugar.
- Only 51.0% of Australian adults brush their teeth the recommended twice a day.
- Risky drinking and smoking contribute to poor oral health.

“The evidence shows that one-third of Australia’s five to six year-olds have had decay in their baby teeth.” This is an unacceptably high rate and puts these children at risk of poor oral health in their development and adult years,” says Dr Hugo Sachs, ADA Federal President.

Too much sugar, regular drinking and smoking not only impacts on oral health, but is also linked to preventable chronic diseases such as diabetes, obesity and heart disease.

*Australia's Oral Health Tracker* has been developed by Australia’s leading dental academics/ researchers, clinicians, policy and public health experts. It sets targets for improving the oral health of children, young people and adults by the year 2025 – aligned with the World Health Organisation’s targets for global prevention and reduction in chronic diseases.

“*Australia's Oral Health Tracker* highlights the remarkable cost of poor oral health to individuals and to the health budget,” says Professor Rosemary Calder, Director, AHPC.

“In 2015-16, there were **67,266 potentially preventable hospitalisations** for oral health problems and almost one-third of these were children under the age of nine years. Worryingly, there’s a growing number of children in this age group who are being admitted to hospital for dental health reasons.”

“Preventable hospital admissions are of concern to all governments. One in ten preventable admissions are due to dental conditions, mostly untreated tooth decay,” she said.

*Australia's Oral Health Tracker* sets a target of a **10% reduction** in the proportion of children needing hospital care because of their dental health.



“Poor oral health in childhood is a predictor of disease in adulthood. Australia needs to recognise that oral health care is part of good health care, and that access to dental care is a significant contributor to good oral and physical health,” adds Dr Sachs.

“Australians deserve a healthier future,” says Professor Calder. “This is why it is critical for governments to address the underlying risk factors for chronic disease as part of their prevention agenda. The *Australia’s Health Tracker* series is an evidence-based way to monitor and report on how Australia is tracking towards better health.”

**Interviews available with:**

Dr Hugo Sachs, President, Australian Dental Association

Prof Rosemary Calder, Director, Australian Health Policy Collaboration

**Launch:** Press welcome

*Australia’s Oral Health Tracker*

**Date:** Tuesday, 20 March 2018

**Time:** 7.45am - 9:00am

**Address:** Senate Alcove, Parliament House, Parliament Drive Canberra ACT.

**Data:**

*Australia’s Oral Health Tracker* report cards available at: [www.ada.org.au/oralhealthtracker](http://www.ada.org.au/oralhealthtracker)