



The Oral Health of Australia

Oral health and priority groups¹

- Tooth decay and gum disease are the most common oral diseases, both of which are preventable and treatable
- Poor oral health – mainly tooth decay, gum disease and tooth loss – affects many Australian children and adults
- Some population groups are at greater risk of poor oral health, including:
 - People who are socially disadvantaged or on low incomes
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians
 - People living in regional and remote areas
 - People with additional and/or specialised health care needs

Childhood tooth decay and dental visits

- 42% of children aged 5–10 have experienced dental decay in their deciduous (baby) teeth.²
- 38% of children aged 12–14 years have experienced dental decay in their permanent teeth.²
- Tooth decay rates are highest for Indigenous children and those from low-income households or living in remote or very remote regions.²
- 29% of children aged 5–6 years have never visited a dental provider.³

Adult oral health

- Nearly half (49%) of people aged 15 years and older visited a dental professional in the last 12 months.⁴
- Around 1 in 3 (32%) adults aged 15 and over with their own teeth have at least one tooth with untreated dental decay.⁵
- Adults who usually visit the dentist for a problem were nearly twice as likely as those who usually visited for a check-up to have at least one tooth with untreated dental decay.⁶
- 33% of 35–54 year olds, 51% of 55–74 year olds and 69% of those aged 75 and over have experienced gum disease.⁷

Potentially preventable hospitalisations

- Around 78,800 hospitalisations for dental conditions across Australia potentially could have been prevented with earlier treatment in 2021–22.⁸
- The rate of potentially preventable hospitalisations due to dental conditions was higher for Indigenous Australians and those living in remote or very remote regions.⁸
- Dental conditions were the leading cause of potentially preventable hospitalisations in NSW in 2021–22.⁹
- There were 20,253 potentially preventable hospitalisations for dental conditions in NSW in 2021–22.⁹

Oral health hospitalisations in NSW by reason, 2021–22¹⁰

- 1) Developmental disorders of teeth: 17,911 (48%)
- 2) Dental caries (tooth decay): 9,992 (27%)
- 3) Other diagnosis: 5,641 (15%)
- 4) Other infection of teeth and gums: 3,456 (9%)
- 5) Injury: 669 (1.8%)

Public dental waiting lists in NSW

- 78,712 people were on NSW public dental waiting lists in March 2024.¹¹
- The median waiting time for general dental care in 2021–2022 was 485 days in NSW.⁴

1. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/dental-oral-health/oral-health-and-dental-care-in-australia/contents/>
2. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/dental-oral-health/oral-health-and-dental-care-in-australia/contents/healthy-teeth> introduction
3. <https://www.adelaide.edu.au/press/ua/media/631/ncohs-ebook.pdf#page=108&zoom=100,90,205>
4. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/dental-oral-health/oral-health-and-dental-care-in-australia/contents/dental-care>
5. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/dental-oral-health/oral-health-and-dental-care-in-australia/contents/healthy-teeth> (2017–2018 data)
6. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/dental-oral-health/oral-health-and-dental-care-in-australia/contents/healthy-teeth>
7. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/dental-oral-health/oral-health-and-dental-care-in-australia/contents/healthy-mouths>
8. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/dental-oral-health/oral-health-and-dental-care-in-australia/contents/hospitalisations/potentially-preventable-hospitalisations>
9. <https://www.healthstats.nsw.gov.au/indicator?name=-pph-cond-hos&location=NSW&view=BarHorizontal&measure=Number&groups=Period,Condition&compare=Condition,Period&filter=Period,21/22&filter=Condition,Dental%20conditions>
10. www.healthstats.nsw.gov.au
11. <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/oralhealth/pages/public-dental-care-waiting.aspx>