

Media release

14 October 2021

Our state of decay on World Cavity Free Future Day

Today on World Cavity-Free Future Day the Australian Dental Association Branch Victorian Branch (ADAVB) is highlighting the appalling rates of preventable tooth decay (dental caries) and enormous expenditure on oral disease in Australia.

A cavity-free future seems a world away. Data recently released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) Disease expenditure in Australia 2018-19 reported that the highest expenditure specific condition was dental caries (\$5.1 billion). This accounted for 57 per cent of the total spending on oral disorders. The AIHW report provides the most recent data available on the health care expenditure on all Australian Burden of Disease Study conditions, including expenditure by health care sector and type of condition. More was spent in total on dental conditions (\$11 billion) than on GP services (\$10 billion) and on public hospital emergency departments (\$6 billion) in 2018-2019.

The ADA's 2020 national consumer survey found that of the 25,000 respondents, 30 per cent of adults rated their oral health as poor or very poor, increasing to 50 per cent of those older than 56 years of age. Over 60 per cent of adults had not seen a dentist for at least two years. Not visiting the dentist regularly enough was seen as the biggest contributor, an issue which has worsened during the pandemic.

"Restrictions on dental practices in Victoria have prevented the provision of routine dental care during each lockdown period. Dental practices have been restricted to only providing mostly urgent or emergency dental care. "As a result, patients have had to defer routine dental care, regular dental check-ups and preventive treatment, leading to a deterioration in their oral health," said ADAVB President Dr Jeremy Sternson.

"Dentists are seeing many patients with significant problems that could have been managed in a conservative manner. They have progressed to more serious oral disease, for example tooth decay that could have been treated with a simple filling requiring root canal treatment or extraction because their care was delayed," Dr Sternson said.

The delay of necessary dental care is likely to contribute to poorer oral health and long-term problems for many Victorians and people in other states that have also been affected by COVID lockdowns. The ADAVB is urging

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consumers to make an appointment with their dentist (findadentist.adavb.org/) when restrictions ease and to stay on top of their oral health care with helpful information and resources at adavb.org/oral-health and teeth.org.au.

Further information

World Cavity Free Future Day acffglobal.org/

World Cavity Free Future Day is held in October each year by the Alliance for a Cavity Free Future to create awareness of dental caries and promote prevention and management.

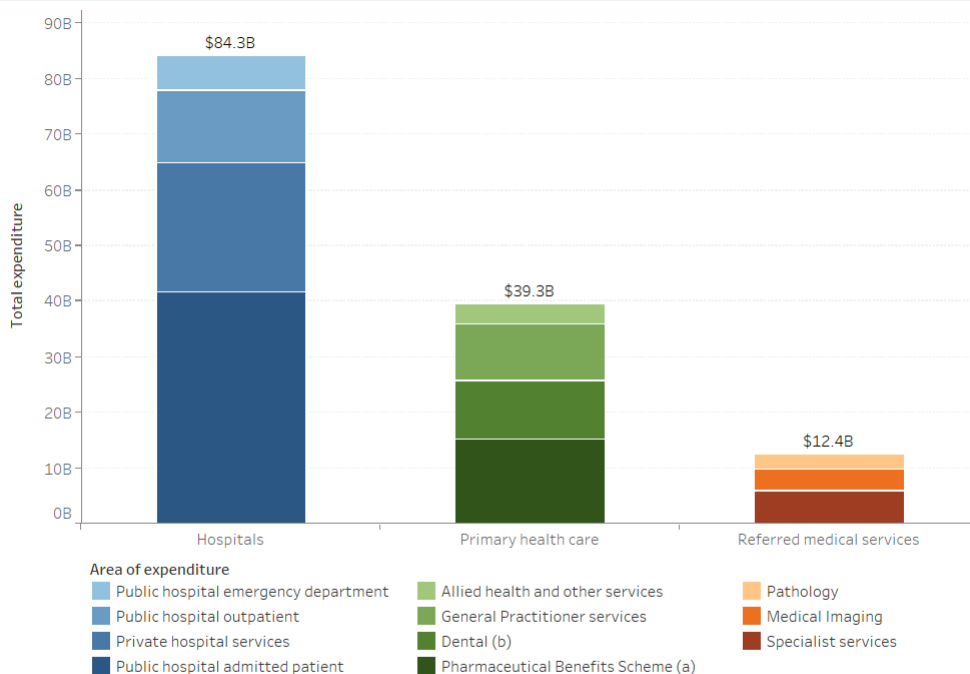
ADA national consumer survey

View recent media release and [download the report](#)

Disease expenditure in 2018-19, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

[Download the AIHW report](#)

Allocated disease expenditure by broad area of expenditure, 2018-19

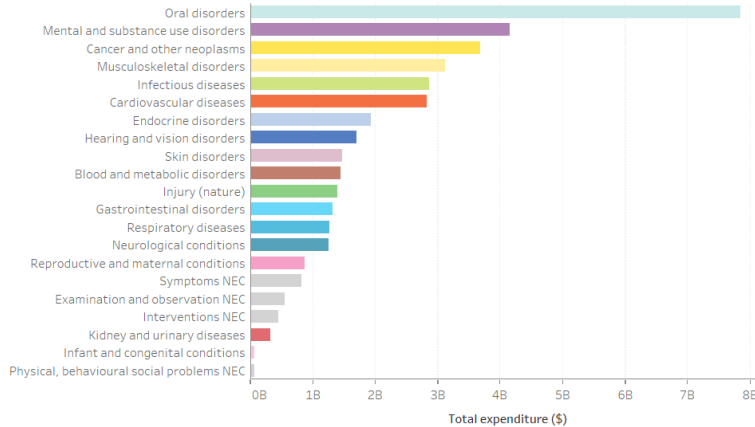


Notes:
 (a) Pharmaceutical expenditure includes benefits and patient contributions for over and under-copayment prescriptions
 (b) Dental expenditure does not contain age or sex disaggregation
 Totals refer to recurrent spending attributed to specific diseases and injuries
 Source: AIHW Disease Expenditure database
<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Expenditure by Australian Burden of Disease groups, 2018-19

Expenditure by broad area of expenditure	Expenditure in Hospitals	Expenditure in Primary health care	Expenditure in Referred medical services
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Select area of expenditure within Primary health care
 All Primary health care



Burden of Disease group		
■ Oral disorders	■ Hearing and vision disorders	■ Reproductive and maternal conditions
■ Mental and substance use disorders	■ Skin disorders	■ Symptoms NEC
■ Cancer and other neoplasms	■ Blood and metabolic disorders	■ Examination and observation NEC
■ Musculoskeletal disorders	■ Injury (nature)	■ Interventions NEC
■ Infectious diseases	■ Gastrointestinal disorders	■ Kidney and urinary diseases
■ Cardiovascular diseases	■ Respiratory diseases	■ Infant and congenital conditions
■ Endocrine disorders	■ Neurological conditions	■ Physical, behavioural social problems ..

NEC: Not elsewhere classified

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Source: AIHW Disease Expenditure database

<http://www.aihw.gov.au>

Find a dentist

Find an ADA dentist by visiting findadentist.adavb.org/.

Oral health information

A wide range of consumer oral health resources is available on the ADAVB website and the ADA's newly launched oral health website that aims broaden people's knowledge on how to look after their teeth, with access to trusted information and advice on over ninety topics.

- adavb.org/oral-health
- teeth.org.au

Media enquiries

Interviews are available with ADAVB President Dr Jeremy Sternson and ADAVB CEO A/Prof Matt Hopcraft.

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