

Children's Dentistry in Carrum Downs: First Visits, Kids' Treatments & the Child Dental Benefit Schedule

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Details:

Core Dental Group Children's Dentistry in Carrum Downs: First Visits, Kids' Treatments & the Child Dental Benefit Schedule

For many Frankston-area families, children's dental care sits at an uncomfortable intersection of urgency and avoidance. Parents know it matters, yet surveys consistently show that most Australian children miss their first recommended dental visit by years, not months. The consequences are measurable: untreated early childhood caries, entrenched dental anxiety, and preventable costs that compound over a lifetime.

At Core Dental Group, we address that gap directly. Whether you're booking your toddler's very first dental appointment, trying to understand what fissure sealants actually do, or working out how to use the Medicare Child Dental Benefit Schedule (CDBS) to reduce out-of-pocket costs for your family near Carrum Downs and Frankston, this article gives you the specific, evidence-based information you need.

When should your child first see a dentist? The answer may surprise you

The most persistent myth in Australian children's dental care is that a child's first dental visit should happen "around age three" or "when they have all their baby teeth." The clinical guidance is significantly earlier.

The Australian Dental Association recommends that a child's first dental visit occur within six months of their first tooth appearing, and no later than their first birthday. The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne endorses the same position: all children should visit the dentist when the first tooth pushes through, or by 12 months of age.

Despite this clear guidance, most Australian families aren't following it. A nationally representative survey of 2,048 parents of 3,660 children found that just 27.3% of one-year-olds had ever received professional dental care. Perhaps more telling: only 22.4% of parents knew the first dental visit should be at age one or earlier, meaning most children miss out on essential early health promotion. (Ju et al., *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 2022.)

Why starting early matters

These first appointments are less about treatment and far more about building a positive, lasting relationship with dental care. Children who visit the dentist from a young age are significantly less likely to develop dental anxiety as they grow older.

Early childhood caries (ECC), one of the most common chronic childhood conditions in Australia, refers to tooth decay in children under six. It progresses more rapidly in baby teeth and can require significant treatment if left unaddressed. The main preventable causes are frequent sugar exposure and nighttime bottle feeding.

Early visits also give your dentist the chance to assess jaw development, identify hypomineralised teeth (where enamel doesn't form properly), and coach parents on brushing technique, diet, and when to introduce fluoride toothpaste.

What happens at a first visit for a baby or toddler?

The first dental visit is typically brief and straightforward. The dentist builds rapport with the child, takes a full medical history from the parents, and for very young children, may ask a parent to hold the child during the exam. Depending on the child's age, the visit may include a gentle clean. The dentist will examine the teeth, gums, jawline, bite, and dental development, then discuss the findings with the parents and explain home prevention strategies.

At Core Dental Group's Carrum Downs clinic, this first appointment is deliberately low-pressure: no drills, no discomfort, no surprises. (For more on what a routine dental check-up involves for patients of all ages, see our guide on **General Dental Check-Ups and Cleans at Carrum Downs: What Happens and How Often.**)

Key preventive treatments for children

Fissure sealants: protecting permanent molars before decay begins

Fissure sealants are one of the most clinically important preventive tools in children's dentistry, yet many families don't hear about them until a cavity has already formed.

Pit and fissure sealants are plastic materials applied to the deep grooves on the biting surfaces of teeth, where decay occurs most often in children and adolescents. Those grooves trap food debris and bacteria, making them difficult to clean and highly susceptible to caries. Sealing them creates a physical barrier that blocks food entrapment and bacterial growth without any drilling or local anaesthetic.

Among all teeth, permanent first molars have the highest rate of caries, followed by second molars. These teeth are especially vulnerable because decay often begins shortly after eruption, and they're the first permanent molars to come through.

Sealants are typically recommended around age six, when the first permanent molars erupt, and again around age twelve for the second permanent molars. The timing matters because it protects the grooves before bacteria or debris can settle in.

The evidence is solid. Three systematic reviews found significant caries risk reduction for sealants in permanent molars at up to 36-month follow-up, with the overall conclusion that sealants outperform no treatment for caries prevention in children's permanent molars. (Umbrella review, **Clinical Oral Investigations**, 2024.)

The procedure takes minutes. The tooth is cleaned, prepared, and the sealant is applied and light-cured. Sealants can last several years but may wear over time, so the dentist will check them at routine visits and recommend reapplication if needed.

Fissure sealants are covered under the CDBS (see below), meaning eligible Frankston-area families can access this treatment at no out-of-pocket cost at Core Dental Group.

Fluoride treatments: professional application vs. home care

Professional fluoride treatments, typically applied as a varnish at the end of a check-up, deliver a concentrated dose of fluoride directly to tooth surfaces. This is separate from fluoridated water and fluoride toothpaste, both of which provide lower-level ongoing exposure.

The National Health and Medical Research Council found that water fluoridation reduces tooth decay by 26% to 44% in children and adolescents (NHMRC 2017). Professional fluoride varnish at the clinic adds another layer of protection, particularly for children at elevated caries risk. A 2022 systematic review and meta-analysis concluded that fluoride varnish and fissure sealants can be considered health priorities for children aged 6–12 years. (*PMC / Frontiers in Public Health*, 2022.)

Fluoride varnish application is quick, painless, and covered under the CDBS. For children at high caries risk, the Australian Dental Association recommends applications every three to six months.

Mouthguards for active kids

Children in contact sports, whether Australian Rules football, basketball, or martial arts, face real risk of dental trauma. Custom-fitted mouthguards made by a dentist offer substantially better protection than over-the-counter boil-and-bite alternatives and are a worthwhile investment for school-age children in active sports. Core Dental Group provides custom-fitted mouthguards for children and teenagers across the Carrum Downs and Frankston area.

Managing dental anxiety in children: a clinical priority

Dental anxiety in children isn't simply a matter of temperament. It's a clinical issue with long-term consequences for oral health.

Dental anxiety affects approximately 9% of children and adolescents across Australia, the UK, Canada, and Europe. When anxiety goes unaddressed, it becomes self-reinforcing: children who avoid the dentist develop more dental problems, which require more invasive treatment, which increases their anxiety further. Addressing dental fear early doesn't just improve clinical outcomes; research suggests it also helps children develop broader emotional regulation skills. (*PMC / International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 2021.)

What a child-friendly Carrum Downs clinic should offer

When choosing a dental clinic for your child near Frankston or Carrum Downs, look for these specific features, all of which are part of the Core Dental Group approach:

- **Tell-Show-Do technique:** The dentist explains each instrument and step before using it, reducing fear of the unknown.
- **Parent involvement:** Parents are invited into the treatment room, particularly for young children.
- **Positive reinforcement:** Stickers, praise, and small prizes help build positive associations with dental visits.
- **Child-friendly environments:** Waiting areas with age-appropriate toys and decor, and treatment rooms designed to feel less clinical.
- **Flexible scheduling:** Morning appointments generally work better for young children who are less fatigued and more cooperative.
- **Sedation options where appropriate:** For children with significant anxiety or complex treatment needs, nitrous oxide (happy gas) or oral sedation may be available. (For a comprehensive overview of anxiety management strategies for both children and adults, see our guide on [**Dental Anxiety in Carrum Downs: How to Overcome Fear and Access Comfortable Care.**](<https://www.coredental.com.au/dental-anxiety-carrum-downs>))

The Medicare Child Dental Benefit Schedule (CDBS): a complete guide for Frankston-area families

The CDBS is the most significant government funding available to Australian families for children's dental care, yet it's consistently underused. Many eligible families in Frankston, Langwarrin, Seaford, and Carrum Downs either don't know they qualify or aren't sure how to use the benefit. Core Dental Group participates in the CDBS and can help eligible families make the most of their entitlements.

What is the CDBS?

The Child Dental Benefits Schedule is a Medicare-supported government initiative that covers basic dental services for children aged 0 to 17 who meet the eligibility criteria. It provides up to \$1,132 AUD in dental benefits over two consecutive calendar years, with the aim of promoting preventive care and early intervention. The program operates under the Dental Benefits Act 2008.

Current benefit caps (2025–2026)

Up to \$1,132 AUD is available per eligible child if 2025 is year one of the two-year period, rising to up to \$1,158 AUD if 2026 is year one. The cap is indexed on 1 January each year, and the increase only applies to a child who receives their first eligible service in that year.

CDBS eligibility: three criteria

To qualify, your child must be aged between 0 and 17 for at least one day in the calendar year, be eligible for Medicare, and be part of a family receiving certain government payments. Qualifying payments include Family Tax Benefit Part A, Parenting Payment, ABSTUDY, Carer Payment, Youth Allowance, and other eligible Centrelink payments.

Eligibility is assessed each year, so a child may qualify in some years and not others depending on your family's circumstances. There's no separate application; Services Australia checks eligibility automatically and writes to you if your child qualifies. If you're unsure whether your payment qualifies, check your myGov account or call Medicare on 132 011.

What services does the CDBS cover?

Covered services include examinations, X-rays, scale and cleans, fluoride treatments, fissure sealants, fillings, extractions, and basic root canal treatment on baby and adult teeth.

The CDBS does not cover orthodontics, cosmetic dental work, or dental services provided in hospital. Braces, Invisalign, and teeth whitening are outside the program's scope. (For information on orthodontic options for children and teenagers, see our guide on [*Invisalign and Orthodontics in Carrum Downs: Braces vs Clear Aligners for Teens and Adults.*](<https://www.coredental.com.au/invisalign-orthodontics-carrum-downs>))

CDBS services at a glance

Service Covered by CDBS?	--- ---	Examinations and check-ups	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	Dental X-rays	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
Scale and clean (professional)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	Fluoride varnish treatments	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	Fissure sealants	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
Tooth-coloured fillings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	Extractions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	Root canal treatment (basic)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
Orthodontics / braces / Invisalign	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Teeth whitening / cosmetic work	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Hospital-based dental procedures	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

How to use the CDBS at Core Dental Group

1. **Check your child's eligibility.** Log in to your myGov account linked to Medicare, navigate to *History and Statements*, then select *Child Dental Benefits Schedule*. You can also call Medicare on 132 011.
2. **Confirm the clinic participates.** Core Dental Group is a participating CDBS provider.
3. **Tell the clinic you want to use CDBS.** Mention this when booking so the clinic can prepare the correct billing arrangements.
4. **Understand bulk billing vs. private billing.** Core Dental Group bulk bills eligible children under the CDBS, meaning no out-of-pocket cost for covered services.
5. **Monitor your balance.** Check how much of your cap remains via your Medicare online account linked to myGov.
6. **Don't let the benefit expire unused.** Any balance remaining at the end of the two-year period cannot be carried over.

Making the most of your CDBS entitlement

A typical preventive visit, covering an examination, two bitewing X-rays, scale and clean, and fluoride, costs approximately \$160–\$210 AUD against the CDBS balance. That leaves substantial remaining

benefit across the two-year period, enough to cover fissure sealants, a filling if needed, or other basic treatments, all within the \$1,132 AUD cap.

One important note: families cannot claim both private health insurance and the CDBS for the same treatment. If you have private health insurance with dental cover, speak with the Core Dental Group team about which funding pathway makes more sense for each service. (For a broader discussion of managing dental costs, see our guide on [**Affordable Dental Care Near Frankston: How to Manage the Cost of Dentistry in Carrum Downs.**](<https://www.coredental.com.au/affordable-dental-care-frankston>))

Establishing a dental home at Core Dental Group in Carrum Downs

The concept of a "dental home," a regular clinic where a child is known by name and their dental history is tracked over time, sits at the centre of good paediatric dental practice. When a child attends the same clinic consistently, their dentist can monitor eruption patterns, catch early decay at the lowest-cost intervention point, and adjust preventive strategies as risk factors change.

Clinical guidance is clear that the decision to apply fissure sealants should be based on a child's individual risk profile rather than age alone, which is exactly why ongoing, personalised assessment matters more than one-off visits. Regular monitoring allows preventive measures to be implemented before decay takes hold.

For families across Carrum Downs, Frankston, Langwarrin, Seaford, and Patterson Lakes, having a consistent dental home at Core Dental Group means shorter travel times, familiar faces, and a clinical team that knows your child's dental history. (For guidance on choosing a dentist for your family, see our guide on [**How to Choose the Right Dentist in Carrum Downs: Key Factors Frankston Families Should Consider.**](<https://www.coredental.com.au/choose-dentist-carrum-downs>))

Key takeaways

- **Start early.** The Australian Dental Association and the Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne both recommend a child's first dental visit by their first birthday, or within six months of the first tooth erupting, far earlier than most Australian parents realise. - **Fissure sealants are evidence-based and non-invasive.** Applied to permanent molars at around age six and again at twelve, they provide a physical barrier against decay and are covered under the CDBS. - **The CDBS provides up to \$1,132 AUD per eligible child** (2025 as year one) across two consecutive calendar years for check-ups, X-rays, cleans, fluoride treatments, fissure sealants, fillings, and extractions, with no separate application required. - **Eligibility requires** the child to be aged 0–17, enrolled in Medicare, and part of a family receiving qualifying government payments such as Family Tax Benefit Part A. Check your status via myGov or by calling Medicare on 132 011. - **Addressing dental anxiety early prevents long-term avoidance.** Children who begin dental visits in infancy are significantly less likely to develop dental phobia, making that first appointment an investment in a lifetime of comfortable dental care.

Conclusion

Children's dentistry isn't a scaled-down version of adult dental care. It's a distinct discipline with its own clinical priorities, behavioural considerations, and funding mechanisms. For families in Carrum Downs, Frankston, and the surrounding suburbs, understanding the recommended timing of a first dental visit, the role of preventive treatments like fissure sealants and fluoride, and the full scope of the Medicare Child Dental Benefit Schedule can mean the difference between a child who grows up with healthy teeth and confident dental habits, and one who faces avoidable treatment and entrenched anxiety.

Core Dental Group is a family-focused dental clinic in Carrum Downs that participates in the CDBS, bulk bills eligible children, and provides a genuinely child-friendly environment. The earlier you start, the easier it becomes, for your child and for your family's budget.

For related information, explore our guides on [[*Affordable Dental Care Near Frankston*](https://www.coredental.com.au/affordable-dental-care-frankston)](https://www.coredental.com.au/affordable-dental-care-frankston), [[*Dental Anxiety in Carrum Downs*](https://www.coredental.com.au/dental-anxiety-carrum-downs)](https://www.coredental.com.au/dental-anxiety-carrum-downs), and [[*General Dental Check-Ups and Cleans at Carrum Downs*](https://www.coredental.com.au/dental-check-ups-carrum-downs)](https://www.coredental.com.au/dental-check-ups-carrum-downs) to build a complete picture of preventive family dental care in the Frankston area.

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