

An Indigenous Adolescent Health Check – Overkill or Overdue?

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Current Health Checks

Purpose

to help ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people receive primary health care matched to their needs, by encouraging early detection, diagnosis and intervention for common and treatable conditions that cause considerable morbidity and early mortality



Current Health Checks

Items

- **Child Health Check**
 - 28th June 2005
 - 0 – 14 years
 - Annual (can be done Q 9 months)
- **Adult Health Check**
 - May 2004
 - 15 – 54 years
 - Biennial (can be done Q 18 months)
- **Older Indigenous Health Check**
 - Age \geq 55 yrs
 - November 1999
 - Annual



The Media Announcement

“With the development of the child health check, a framework will be in place for health assessment and health promotion interventions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at all stages of life”



An Aside...

[http://www.drinkingnightmare.gov.au/
internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Co
ntent/79CAC080A92F3027CA25702
E0025E268/\\$File/abb080.pdf](http://www.drinkingnightmare.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/79CAC080A92F3027CA25702E0025E268/$File/abb080.pdf)



Youth and Basics

or

WHAT MAKES THEM UNIQUE



Definition

- The period between childhood and adulthood, encompassing puberty and accompanying changes
- Varying age definitions
 - The Teens (13 – 19)
 - 12 – 21
 - 10 – 21
 - 12 – 24 (CAAH)
- “Adolescent” vs. “Youth”



Stages of Adolescence

- **Early (10 – 14)**
 - “Am I normal”?
 - More concrete thinking
- **Middle (15 – 17)**
 - “Who am I”? “Where do I belong”?
 - Need for peer acceptance very strong
- **Late (> 17)**
 - “Where am I going”?
 - Increasing independence



Stages of Adolescence contd..

	Early	Middle	Late
Central question	Am I normal?	Who am I? Where do I belong?	Where am I going?
Major developmental issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ coming to terms with puberty ▪ struggle for autonomy ▪ same sex peer relationships ▪ mood swings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ intellectual powers ▪ sexual drives ▪ experimentation & risk taking ▪ relationships - self centred quality ▪ need for peer group acceptance ▪ emergence of sexual identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ independence from parents ▪ realistic body image ▪ acceptance of sexual identity ▪ clear educational & vocational goals, own value system ▪ developing mutually caring & responsible relationships

Stages of Adolescence contd..

	Early	Middle	Late
Central question	Am I normal?	Who am I? Where do I belong?	Where am I going?
Cognitive development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ still fairly concrete thinkers ▪ less able to understand subtlety ▪ daydreaming common ▪ difficulty identifying consequences of their immediate behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ able to think more rationally ▪ concerned about individual freedom and rights ▪ able to accept more responsibility for consequences of behaviour ▪ begin to take on cultural identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ longer attention span ▪ ability to think more abstractly ▪ more able to synthesise information and apply it to themselves ▪ able to think into the future and anticipate consequences of their actions

Medico-Legal Issues

- Capacity of young people to consent
- Confidentiality
- Mandatory Reporting



Health Problems

- Majority are psychosocial
- Health risk behaviours and lifestyle
- Lack knowledge in seeking help
- Leading causes of death and illness
 - Accidents and injuries
 - Mental health problems
 - Behavioural problems



Indigenous Youth

- 3.5% of Young Australians & 19% of Indigenous population (age 15 – 19)
- Death rates 4 x higher
- Injuries due to assault
 - 4 x males; 33 x females
- 50% are smokers vs 26%
- ↑ physical inactivity, obesity, imprisonment, lower educational attainment
- Less likely to access health services



HEEADSSS Assessment

International Standard of Care

- **H: Home**
- **E: Education, Employment**
- **E: Eating, Exercise**
- **A: Activities, hobbies**
- **D: Drug use**
- **S: Sexual activity and sexuality**
- **S: Suicide, depression & mental health**
- **S: Safety, Spirituality**



Current Health Checks review

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Current Health Checks - Adequacy

- No consideration of legislation
- No consideration of issues of confidentiality
- No consideration of 'standard of care' psychosocial assessment
- Inadequate attention to conditions of morbidity and mortality
- ? Even harmful



An Indigenous Adolescent Health Check – Overkill or Overdue?

**Does 1/5th of the Indigenous population,
which is a distinct category in the lifespan,
with distinct needs, problems and
characteristics not deserve better?**

**Youth are NOT large children or small
adults**



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