



# Fact sheet

## Centre for Community Child Health

# Temperament

**Thinking about your baby's temperament can help you to learn more about the unique way that your child is interacting with the world. It could even help you to identify situations in daily life that might be challenging for your child, in order to help you both to utilise strategies that might let you cope more effectively.**

Your child's temperament can't tell you why your child will do something or what your child will do, but it can be a useful indication of how they will interact with the world around them.

Your own temperament also plays a big role in the way that you interact with your child and how each of you manages all sorts of day-to-day situations, from nappy changes to mealtime.

### Goodness of fit

How well your temperament and your child's temperament go together is known as 'goodness of fit'. How well you fit together temperamentally affects how well your child develops socially and emotionally. A poor fit can mean more stress in your relationship with your child.

Goodness of fit is about how well your demands and expectations for your child match with your child's ability given their age, skill development and their own temperament. For example, most parents will put kitchen chemicals up high or in a locked cupboard so curious crawling babies can't reach them, rather than expect a small baby to know that those brightly coloured bottles are dangerous.

### Creating a good fit with your child

Talk with your child and family health nurse for some tips to get you thinking about your child's temperament.

You can consider:

How **sensitive** is your child? How much stimulation—sound, touch, light and so on—does it take for them to react? Do they wake up immediately if the phone rings during naptime?

How **active** is your child? Does your child lie still or wave their arms and legs about when it's time for a nappy change?

How **intense** is your child? Think about how your child reacts to a situation like being hungry or having a wet nappy.

How **regular** is your child? Does your child like to wake up or to eat at around the same time each day or seem to change from one day to the next?

How **adaptable** is your child? How does your child react to getting in or out of the car or to being splashed with water unexpectedly in the bath?

How **persistent** is your child? How easy is it to introduce a new food to their diet? How has your child managed the challenges of learning to crawl or to handle a spoon?

How **easy to soothe** is your child? Think about how easy it is to soothe your baby or toddler when they are agitated or upset.

Thinking about these aspects of your child's temperament can help you to create a good fit with your child. For example, if you know your child is very regular and likes routines, but an upcoming event is going to mean a change in routine, you can plan ahead to help you both to manage that situation.

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## COMMUNITY PAEDIATRIC REVIEW

# Remote Oral Care Pilot – Bupa Health Foundation partnerships

*Photo: Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia Central Operations*

### **Access to a dentist can be anywhere from a few hours to a day's drive for people in remote areas of Australia.**

In collaboration with Bupa Health Foundation and the School of Dentistry at the University of Adelaide, the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia Central Operations seeks to address this imbalance in South Australia by bringing dental services to three remote communities—Marree, Marla and Oodnadatta.

Commenced in 2011, the remote oral care pilot provides dental services such as screening and simple treatments, particularly fluoride application for children and those living with chronic disease such as diabetes.

In addition, the pilot provides communities with oral health education and information. For example, teaching people about how to use toothbrushes correctly and the importance of maintaining healthy teeth.

With the involvement of dental and oral hygienist students from the University of Adelaide's School of Dentistry, the pilot enables supervised dental and oral hygiene students to gain insight and experience in providing oral care in remote areas—a unique opportunity for skill development.

Since its inception, the pilot has provided dental service visits to Marree, Marla and Oodnadatta with a very positive

response from all three communities. Statistics recorded as part of the pilot provide overwhelming support to the need to enhance access to dental services for people living in remote areas.

Alarming, the prevalence of dental caries (or cavities) in children presenting to the clinics is high. Over 60% of 4–6 year olds and over 80% of school-aged children have been assessed as having one or more dental caries.

So far, the clinics have examined more than 270 people, and there has been a 66% increase in the number of patients attending a second round of clinic visits compared to the initial round.

Pleasingly, a significant proportion of those who received a dental examination and treatment during their first visit to the clinic did not require any follow up treatment during a subsequent visit.

What is most encouraging is that, following treatment with fluoride application and fissure sealant, the four to six-year-old children have re-presented six months later with no new cavities.

As well as providing much needed dental care to remote communities, the clinics also provide fifth-year dental students with valuable practical experience and encourage the development of remote dentists of the future.

The Bupa Health Foundation is committed to improving the health of the Australian community and the sustainability of the health system. Too often, good ideas never get the chance to make a difference. The Bupa Health Foundation, with its partnerships in health research and practice, aims to put that right.

Established as a charitable foundation in 2005, the Bupa Health Foundation has partnered in over 80 initiatives nationally, with a combined investment of around \$19 million, across its key focus areas: promoting wellness; managing chronic disease; healthy ageing; empowering people about their health; and promoting affordable healthcare.

[www.bupa.com.au/foundation](http://www.bupa.com.au/foundation)

