

KEY MESSAGES

Y Health – Staying Deadly

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Policy context

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander youth are at-risk health consumers, being over-represented in social and health disadvantage and under-represented as seekers of health care. Young people have very different developmental and health needs and causes of illness compared to children or adults. Adolescence is also a period of risk taking and experimentation which has potential for serious adverse health outcomes. In addition, young people are future parents; health promotion activities in this group have the potential for impacting on the next generation.

Through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS), Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health Checks have been in place to ensure that primary health care is matched to needs, by identifying and addressing problems at an early stage. The current MBS Item 715 (Health Check) covers children (0 - 14 yrs), adults (15 - 54 yrs) and older persons (>55 yrs). All of these categories are unsatisfactory in their ability to address youth health needs. Furthermore, though there is some research available regarding youth assessment, there is no comprehensive health screening tool available for Aboriginal youth. Using a Community Based Participatory and Translational Action Research approach, this project has developed and implemented an evidence informed, culturally valid, strengths based and user friendly Youth Health Check and accompanying Youth Health Audit tool.

Key messages

- > There is a significant gap in an appropriate preventive screening tool for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander youth who are a priority at-risk group
- > Preventive approaches are a core component of the Australian Government's Close the Gap efforts and are aligned to the National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health 2003-2013
- > There is support from the local and broader Aboriginal community for a youth specific Health Check
- > An evidence informed Youth Health Check has been developed and successfully implemented
- > Adjusting the existing Medicare Item 715 for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health Checks to include a Youth category (age 12 – 24 yrs.) will provide vital support for the uptake of Youth Health Checks within health services including mainstream general practice