

Title:

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Summary

Risk based Dental Fitness Classification in the Australian Defence Force

On 01 July 2020 the Australian Defence Force implemented a risk-based Dental Fitness Classification (DFC) system through the release of Defence Health Manual Volume 2 Part 11 Chapter 1—*Dental fitness*.

The previous DFC system was a treatment-based classification with a uniform recall interval of 12 months for a periodic dental examination (PDE). The four classifications were reflective of the current intra-oral disease state and did not address risk factors for oral disease and its progression. The new DFC system not only assesses past history of disease but it also considers oral health risks that may result in accelerated progression of oral disease and heighten the risk of a member becoming a dental casualty when remote to the Garrison environment.

A member's recall interval for a PDE is individualised, allowing members to be recalled at 3, 6, 12 or 24 month intervals according to their oral health risk factors. The risk analysis is guided by medical history, social factors, military history and present state and history of oral pathology. The new DFC provides greater autonomy for Defence dentists to provide individualised risk-based care to our members. It also communicates to Command the risk that a member will become a dental casualty on deployment in the absence of oral health interventions.

This discussion will look at DFC allocations since the policy was implemented, the associated PDE intervals, lessons learnt and any unintended consequences evident thus far.