

“You’re not healthy without good oral health”

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Why Oral Health?

Oral health is more than healthy teeth. Inclusion of oral health in health reform will ***protect and improve the health status of all Coloradans***. Oral health is related to general ***well-being and quality of life*** as measured along functional, psychosocial, and economic dimensions. Diet, nutrition, sleep, psychological status, social interaction, school, and work are affected by impaired oral health. Oral diseases and disorders in and of themselves affect health and well-being throughout life.

- √ The mouth reflects general health status.
- √ Oral diseases and conditions are associated with other health problems.
- √ Lifestyle behaviors that affect general health such as tobacco use, excessive alcohol use, and poor dietary choices affect oral health as well.
- √ Safe and effective measures exist to prevent the most common dental diseases—dental decay and gum disease.

Impact of poor oral health in children

- √ Pain and suffering due to untreated diseases affect children’s ability to concentrate and learn; their speech development and self esteem.
- √ In Colorado an estimated 7.8 million hours of school are lost annually due to oral pain. Low-income children suffer nearly 12 times more restricted-activity days than children from higher-income families.
- √ Despite the fact that oral diseases are nearly 100% preventable, dental decay is the 5th most common childhood chronic disease.

Impact of poor oral health in adults

- √ 42% of adults in Colorado do not have dental insurance. Those with dental insurance are almost one and a half times more likely to visit the dentist than those without dental insurance.
- √ Employed adults lose more than 164 million hours of work each year due to dental disease or dental visits.
- √ Periodontal disease, a disease of the gums that afflicts more than 30% of the adult population, is often under-diagnosed and under-treated, despite mounting evidence of its relationship to systemic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and pre-term, low-birth weight babies.
- √ 59% of diabetics and 44% of smokers have lost at least one tooth due to decay or gum disease compared to 35% of the general adult population.
- √ Oral Cancer five-year survival rates are less than breast, cervical, and prostate cancers.

- √ The Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring Survey in 2000 and 2001 found 24% of mothers in Colorado experienced dental problem during pregnancy, but only half sought dental care, increasing their risk for pre-term/low birth weight deliveries.

Impact of poor oral health on seniors

- √ Only 30% of seniors age 65 and over have any type of dental insurance.
- √ Periodontal infections are more common in the elderly- about 23% of 65-74 year olds have periodontal disease.
- √ Seniors are seven times more likely to be diagnosed with oral cancer than younger individuals.
- √ Many seniors take medications that have the complicating side effect of reducing the amount and flow of saliva causing "dry mouth"- which contributes to increased dental decay.
- √ While 61% of the population reports having a dental visit in the past year; only 45% of seniors 75 years and older report having a dental visit.

The need for including oral health in comprehensive health care reform

Oral health is an *inseparable part of general health and overall wellness*. Oral health benefits promote not just dental health but systemic health. According to the Academy of General Dentistry, more than 90 percent of systemic disease including diabetes, cancer and stroke, have oral manifestations that are detectable during oral exams.

Children and adults who lack dental insurance or funds to pay for services often forego needed preventive and restorative care. Delaying dental care can have profound and negative effects on a person's overall health.



Oral Health Awareness Colorado!