



ORAL HEALTH MATTERS

For too long, oral health has gone unrecognized as integral to overall health. Too many Washingtonians do not have access to preventive and routine dental care.

Oral Health Across the Lifespan

Good oral health is important at every age, and tooth decay and other oral diseases are preventable through a combination of fluoride, dental sealants, and access to affordable, regular dental care.

PREGNANT WOMEN, INFANTS, AND TODDLERS

- An infection caused by bacteria in the mouth can be passed from a pregnant mom to her baby, which may affect the baby's health.
- For infants and toddlers, untreated dental decay can impede proper nutrition and speech development and set a course for a lifetime of poor oral health.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- Good oral health is essential to a child's social well-being and academic success.
- Children of color and children in low-income households have the highest rates of dental decay and the fewest experiences with a dental professional.
- In Washington, Latino children are twice as likely as white children to have rampant decay; American Indian and Alaska Native children are three times more likely.

ADULTS

- Regular dental care can prevent extensive and costly treatment in later years.
- For adults, it is essential to reduce the risk of damage to teeth and gums. Infections in the mouth have been linked to other systemic health problems, such as stroke, heart attack, and diabetes.
- Black, American Indian, Alaska Native, multiracial, and Latino adults are more likely to lose their teeth than white and Asian adults.

SENIORS

- As they age, people experience a natural wearing-away of the teeth and gums, which can make them more vulnerable to oral disease.
- Seniors who maintain good oral health tend to have better quality of life. Untreated oral disease in seniors can impede proper nutrition.
- Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, and Hispanic elders in Snohomish County identified dental care as one of their greatest needs.

DID YOU KNOW?

Children from low-income households and children of color have the worst access to regular oral health care and the highest rates of decay.

Among adults, oral disease is linked with serious health problems like heart disease, diabetes, respiratory infections, and osteoporosis.

Nearly 24 percent of Washington seniors with annual incomes under \$25,000 have not seen a dentist in five years or more.

Join the **Washington Dental Access Campaign** and help us increase access to affordable care that meets the needs of our most vulnerable populations, including children, seniors, and low-income adults.

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