

Why is Oral Health important?

Having a healthy mouth and teeth are very important to your overall health and well-being. Tooth decay, gum disease, infections and oral cancer can be very expensive to treat and can cause serious health problems.

- **Tooth decay (dental caries) is the most common chronic disease among U.S. children**
- **Many families, and especially older adults, can't afford or don't have dental insurance**
- **Oral cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer and has a high death rate**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), poor oral health can also be related to serious problems like lung disease, heart disease, diabetes and can even cause problems during pregnancy.

Keys to Good Oral Health

- Brush twice-a-day using toothpaste with fluoride in it
- Floss at least once a day
- Eat healthy meals, drink water and milk instead of juice and soda, and limit snacks between meals
- Drink water with fluoride in it
- Take children to the dentist at age one, or when their first tooth appears
- Visit your dentist for regularly scheduled cleanings

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West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources

Bureau for Public Health
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Improving health, one smile at a time.

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The mission of the Oral Health Program is to promote and improve the oral health of all West Virginians.

What is the Oral Health Program?

The goals of the Oral Health Program are:

- 1 To educate the public about the importance of oral health and how to properly take care of your mouth and teeth**
- 2 To help connect the public to reliable oral healthcare**
- 3 To keep track of the overall oral health of West Virginians**

The Oral Health Program has developed three projects to help reach its goals:

- **Children's Dentistry**
- **Donated Denture**
- **Pre-Employment**

Working with other state agencies and community partners, these projects promote the importance of good oral health and help prevent diseases.

What does the Oral Health Program do?

- Provides the public with education and supplies for good oral health, like fluoride supplements and water test kits
- Builds community partnerships to promote and support state and local oral health programs and policies
- Helps communities develop school-based dental services
- Provides oral hygiene supplies and education materials to organizations across the state
- Promotes and supports dental services and access to affordable dental care
- Keeps track of dental disease rates in the state
- Guarantees a sizable and skilled oral health workforce
- Evaluates effectiveness, availability and quality of oral health programs and services

Prevention Strategies

Many oral health diseases can be prevented. For a healthy mouth, the Oral Health Program supports daily brushing and flossing, regular visits to the dentist, dental sealants and using teeth-strengthening fluoride.

Protecting your mouth and teeth from injury is also very important. Mouthguards can help save teeth and protect the jaw from breaks. The National Youth Sports Foundation for Safety reports that an athlete is 60 times more likely to damage teeth when not wearing a mouthguard.



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