

IT'S ALL CONNECTED

The health of the mouth influences other aspects of health—and vice versa.

THE MENTAL HEALTH — MOUTH-HEALTH CONNECTION

Any serious or chronic pain issue can hamper mental health and daily life. If there is a painful injury or illness in the mouth, it's likely to get in the way of normal functions like smiling, eating, or talking – and also take a toll on mood.¹



THE FAMILY HEALTH— MOUTH-HEALTH CONNECTION

Babies naturally pick up bacteria from their surroundings that builds the immune system. Families with healthy mouths pass on helpful bacteria to babies, but if there is untreated oral disease in the family, infants can be exposed to the germs that cause cavities.²



THE MEDICINE — MOUTH-HEALTH CONNECTION

Some medications — like decongestants, antihistamines, or painkillers— can cause a dry mouth. Because saliva protects the mouth from the harmful bacteria that cause cavities and gum disease, the dry mouth "side effect" is one way that issues in other parts of the body influence oral health.³



THE IMMUNE SYSTEM — MOUTH-HEALTH CONNECTION

Because the mouth is an important part of the immune system, a healthy mouth boosts the body's ability to protect against disease. Auto-immune diseases, like Celiac disease or lupus, can cause swelling in the mouth. In turn, inflammation can set off other health problems.⁴



THE VITAL ORGAN — MOUTH-HEALTH CONNECTION

Endocarditis, a heart infection, is often caused when bacteria from another part of the body gets into the bloodstream and spreads to the heart. It is also possible for infections in the mouth to spread to the brain. This is why gum disease is a serious infection that shouldn't be ignored.⁵



THE DIABETES — MOUTH-HEALTH CONNECTION

Diabetes can harm the mouth, and problems in the mouth make it harder to control diabetes. Uncontrolled blood sugar can cause swollen gums, which disrupts the mouth's natural defenses and makes cavities more likely. That's why oral health care is an important part of diabetes management.⁶



It's all connected!

A practical approach to health includes oral health in planning, policy, and practices.

1. American Pain Society, 2017. "Activity pattern profiles: Relationship with affect, daily functioning, impairment, and variables related to life goals."

2. PLoS Biology, 2013. "Mom Knows Best: The Universality of Maternal Microbial Transmission."

3. Mayo Clinic, 2016. "Oral health: A window to your overall health."

4. Harvard Medical School Healthbeat

5. Journal of the American Dental Association, 2009. "Poor oral hygiene as a risk factor for infective endocarditis."

6. American Diabetes Association, 2014. "Diabetes and Oral Health Problems."



KEYS TO GOOD ORAL HEALTH



Getting to good oral health is like going through a series of locked doors. Without the right keys, most people can't get there—no matter how hard they try. The keys to good oral health also unlock good overall health, so let's start opening doors.



Key #1:

FLUORIDATED WATER

Fluoridated water prevents tooth decay and cavities, but many people lack access to it.



More than **one-third (36 percent)** of kids in the U.S. don't drink fluoridated water on a regular basis.¹ If fluoridated water systems were in all communities, good oral health would be in reach of all kids...just by turning on the tap.



Key #2:

DENTAL SEALANTS

Children face high risk of cavities in their back teeth, which are hard to protect with fluoride alone.



Dental sealants prevent cavities before they develop—but almost **1 in 3 states (31%)** lack a school-based dental sealant program.² Sealant programs in schools, community centers, and other places can shut the door on cavities and open it to good oral health.



Key #3:

DENTAL INSURANCE

Adults with dental insurance are more likely to go to the dentist, take their children to the dentist, and get the care they need.



But **1 in 3 Americans** doesn't have dental insurance.³ We can knock down this barrier to good oral health when all states provide Medicaid recipients with dental benefits.

Let's make sure everyone in America can unlock the doors to good oral health.
Our country will be healthier and stronger when we do!

1. Kids Count Data Center. (2012). Children Who Lack Access to Fluoridated Water. Retrieved <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/8023-children-who-lack-access-to-fluoridated-water?loc=1&loc=1#detailed/1/any/false/868/any/15418,15417>
2. Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD) Best Practices Committee. (2014). Best Practice Approach: School-based dental sealant programs. Retrieved from <http://www.astdd.org>
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016). Oral Health Data. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealthdata/>

