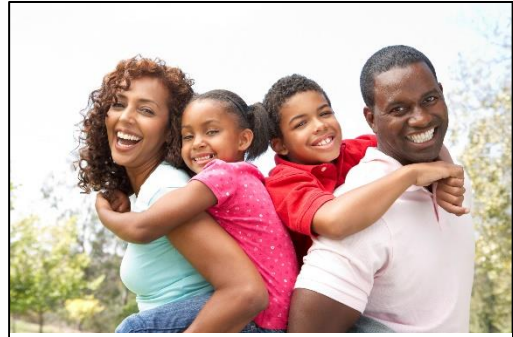


Priority Areas – Oral Health

Oral health affects our ability to speak, smile, eat, and show emotions. It also affects self-esteem, school performance, and attendance at work and school. Oral diseases—which range from cavities to gum disease to oral cancer—cause pain and disability for millions of Americans.

Cavities (tooth decay) are one of the most common chronic diseases in the U.S. By age 34, more than 80% of people have had at least one cavity. In 2015, more than 40% of adults felt pain in their mouth. The nation spends more than \$124 billion a year on dental care. Each year about 34 million school hours and \$45 billion in productivity are lost due to dental emergencies



Smiling family outdoors (Wikipedia)

Oral health has been linked with other chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease. It is also linked with risk behaviors like using tobacco and foods and beverages high in sugar. Public health strategies like community water fluoridation and school sealant programs have saved money and prevented cavities. Some oral health disparities include the following:

- **Overall.** Non-Hispanic blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians and Alaska Natives generally have the poorest oral health of any racial and ethnic groups in the United States.
- **Children and Tooth Decay.** The greatest racial and ethnic disparity among children aged 3–5 years and aged 6–9 years is seen in Mexican American and non-Hispanic black children.
- **Adults and Untreated Tooth Decay.** Blacks, non-Hispanics, and Mexican Americans aged 35–44 years experience untreated tooth decay nearly twice as much as non-Hispanic whites.
- **Tooth Decay and Education.** Adults aged 35–44 years with less than a high school education experience nearly three times the untreated tooth decay of adults with at least some college education. In addition, adults aged 35–44 years with less than a high school education experience destructive periodontal (gum) disease nearly three times that of adults with a least some college education.
- **Adults and Oral Cancer.** The 5-year survival rate is lower for oral pharyngeal (throat) cancers among black men than whites (35% versus 61%).
- **Adults and Periodontitis.** 42% of U.S. adults have some form of periodontitis. In adults aged 65 and older, almost 60% have periodontitis. Periodontitis is higher in men than women, and greatest among Mexican Americans and non-Hispanic blacks, and those with less than a high school education.

More Information:

- [Healthy People 2030 oral health objectives](#) are to prevent and control oral and craniofacial diseases, conditions, and injuries and improve access to related services. Like general health, oral health status in the United States tends to vary by social and economic conditions.
- [Florida Dental Association](#) (FDA) COVID-19 practice guidelines are outlined by the [American Dental Association \(ADA\) reopening toolkit](#)