

BE PROUD OF YOUR MOUTH

World Oral Health Day

On the 20 March every year, we ask the world to unite to help reduce the burden of oral diseases, which affect individuals, health systems and economies everywhere.

Its purpose: to empower people with the knowledge, tools and confidence to secure good oral health.

Oral diseases are a major health concern for many countries and negatively impact people throughout their lives. Oral diseases lead to pain and discomfort, social isolation and loss of self-confidence, and they are often linked to other serious health issues. And yet, there is no reason to suffer: most oral health conditions are largely preventable and can be treated in their early stages.

That is why World Oral Health Day (WOHD) is so vital as it:

- **empowers** individuals to take personal action;
- **encourages** schools and youth groups to deliver learning activities about oral health;
- **provides** a unified platform for oral health professionals and the wider healthcare community to educate the populations they serve;
- **urges** governments and policymakers to champion better oral health for all.

WOHD is an initiative of FDI World Dental Federation; an organization that brings together the world of dentistry with the aim of achieving optimal oral health for everyone.

We rely on your actions to help us shout louder about the importance of good oral health. Get involved in any way you can. Use this toolkit to help.

Campaign theme: 2021–2023

The theme for the next three years sends out a simple but powerful message:

BE PROUD OF YOUR MOUTH.

In other words, value and take care of it.

This year, we want to inspire change by focusing on the importance of oral health for overall health, **BECAUSE GOOD ORAL HEALTH CAN HELP YOU LIVE A LONGER, HEALTHIER LIFE.**

And that is something worth taking action for.

Campaign key messages

It is estimated that oral diseases affect nearly 3.5 billion people, which makes it the most common health condition globally.

WOHD provides an important platform to raise awareness about oral health and the pivotal role it plays in maintaining overall health, well-being and quality of life.

The main campaign messages are:

✓ **Oral health is one of the main pillars of overall health and well-being**

A healthy mouth allows people to speak, smile, smell, taste, touch, chew, swallow and convey a range of emotions with confidence and without pain, discomfort and disease, e.g. tooth decay (dental caries). Maintaining good oral health can have a positive impact on the management of diabetes and could help in the prevention of other health conditions, such as cardiovascular disease (heart disease and stroke), pneumonia and some cancers. Therefore, it is integral to securing a good quality of life.

FACT: You can't be healthy without good oral health. Oral diseases may directly affect a limited area of the human body, but their consequences impact the body as a whole.

✓ **Managing risk factors for oral diseases can also help avoid other health conditions**

The good news is that controlling the four main risk factors for oral diseases, which include an unhealthy diet high in sugar, tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol and poor oral hygiene, will also help in the prevention of other diseases, such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, cancer and diabetes.

FACT: Implementing oral health promotion strategies and empowering people with the knowledge to make informed decisions can help in disease prevention.

Campaign key messages (cont.)

✓ Most oral health conditions are largely preventable and can be treated in their early stages

Oral health as well as general health can be protected through the following actions:

- Practicing a good oral hygiene routine, which includes brushing for two minutes, twice a day, with a fluoride toothpaste.
- Visiting the dentist for regular check-ups and dental cleanings.
- Eating a well-balanced diet low in sugar and high in fruit and vegetables, and favouring water as the main drink.
- Stopping use of all forms of tobacco, including chewing of areca nuts.
- Limiting alcohol consumption.
- Using protective equipment, such as a mouthguard, when doing contact sports and travelling on bicycles to reduce the risk of injuries.

FACT: Sugar, a major contributor to obesity, is also the primary cause of tooth decay. More than 530 million children suffer from tooth decay in their primary teeth (milk teeth).

✓ Universal Health Coverage: every person, everywhere should have access to the health services they need without the risk of financial hardship when paying for them

Widespread disparities exist around access to, and uptake of, oral health services. Universal Health Coverage (UHC) cannot be achieved overnight. However, WHO is an opportunity to persuade our governments to do more. Countries at all income levels can take steps to move closer to achieving UHC and develop their own package that integrates oral health and fits the needs of their population.

FACT: Oral diseases disproportionately affect the poor and socially-disadvantaged members of society. Essential oral health services should be available, accessible and affordable for all.