



Fact Sheet

Oral Health in America Advances and Challenges

A Report from the National Institutes of Health

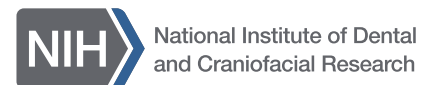
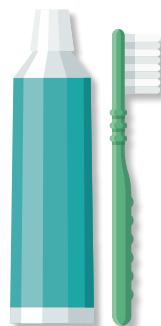
Section 3B: Oral Health Across the Lifespan: Older Adults

Key Summary

- Today, very few older adults lose all of their teeth as a result of improvements in disease prevention and treatment.
- Dental implants increasingly provide a safe and effective method for replacing lost teeth and for aiding in the retention of lower dentures; however, they remain a costly procedure and are out of the reach of most older adults.
- As working-age adults transition into retirement, most lose their employer-provided dental insurance, and Medicare does not provide an oral health benefit. This puts their oral health at risk.
- Older adults are living longer than ever before, many with chronic diseases and complex health conditions that would be best managed by medical and oral health professionals working together.
- Older adults have a higher risk for poor oral health than any other age group because many of them lack dental insurance, have underlying health conditions, lack convenient access to care (especially those living in underserved urban and rural areas), and have limited financial resources. These factors result in the higher prevalence of many oral diseases in older adults, compared to younger adults.
- Receiving appropriate oral care can be especially difficult for older adults who are frail, disabled, homebound, cognitively impaired, or who reside in long-term care facilities. A coordinated team of caregivers is essential to address their care.

Call to Action

- A policy that mandates dental coverage in Medicare would reduce health inequities for older adults by assuring access to preventive and other oral health services for all, including those who are place-bound or in need of caregiver assistance.



www.nidcr.nih.gov/oralhealthinamerica

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